

Rewriting History:
postmodern and postcolonial negotiations in the fiction of
J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie

John Martin McLeod

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Ph.D.

The University of Leeds

School of English

September 1995

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

Abstract

This thesis is a study of the rewriting of history in the work of four novelists: J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie. I argue that their work occupies a particular position that is both within contemporary British fiction, yet at one remove from it. Their work is situated within the context of critiques of history that are the source of a conflict between postmodernism and postcolonialism. I suggest that each writer engages with postmodernist aesthetics often in an attempt to produce critical histories that bear witness to the voices of those hitherto silenced in conventional historiography. However, these novelists remain anxious as to the potential consequences of mobilising postmodernist models of history, particularly as to the problems this creates concerning historical reference. The thesis aims to identify the range of related attitudes to postmodernist critiques of history at this particular juncture of contemporary fiction in English.

I approach the specific position of the novelists under study through Homi Bhabha's work on the confluence of the postmodern and the postcolonial, focusing in particular on his suggestion that the postmodern refutation of Western epistemology enables a postcolonial space where a new range of histories emerge. Because each writer works between at least two cultures, and primarily within Britain, they negotiate from within received epistemology in an attempt to locate a space at its boundaries where conventional forms of knowledge no longer have efficacy. However, in contrast to Bhabha, these writers struggle to reach this space and remain sceptical as to the usefulness of postmodernism in making available new forms of historiography. Ultimately, their work enables a critique of current ways of theorising the relationship between the postmodern and the postcolonial in literary studies.

Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis was conducted under the supervision of Professor Shirley Chew. I am extremely grateful to Professor Chew for her patience, encouragement, criticisms and steadfast support that I enjoyed throughout my research. I learned a great deal under her guidance. I have also enjoyed much support from many members of staff in the School of English at the University of Leeds. In particular I would like to thank Richard Brown, Alistair Stead and John Whale for their continual encouragement and enthusiasm. I am also grateful to the supervisor of my M.A. dissertation, Bryan Cheyette. Much of my interest in the writers I explore in this thesis was nurtured while I was Dr Cheyette's student.

As a research student in the School of English I was extremely fortunate to pursue my studies with many supportive fellow postgraduates, in particular Patricia Badir, Tim Burke, Angela Keane, Antony Rowland and Eriks Uskalis. I am especially grateful to Matthew Pateman and Mark Robson for their continual friendship and support.

My colleagues in the English Department at LSU University College, Southampton, have also been extremely helpful. I wish to thank in particular Steve Dorney, Sally Keenan, Gillian Skinner and Bernard Tucker for their assistance during the last few months of my research.

Ultimately, I am deeply grateful for the lively encouragement I have received from my parents, Veronica and James McLeod. Their love and support was invaluable throughout the writing of this thesis, and they provided constant motivation for my studies. My research would not have been possible without them.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Ronald Andrew Park (1933-1991).

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Introduction

This thesis is a study of the historical fiction of four contemporary novelists - J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie. It situates their work within the context of critiques of history that are the source of a conflict between postmodernism and postcolonialism. A perception of this conflict is provided by Linda Hutcheon, in a recent article concerning an exhibition mounted between November 1989 and August 1990 at the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada, entitled 'Into the Heart of Africa'. I begin by summarising her argument in order to introduce briefly the context within which I read the novels in this study. The exhibition, she explains, featured a collection of objects that had 'come into being largely through bequests from the families of Canadian missionaries and soldiers in the British African colonies at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one' (Hutcheon, 1994: 211). The point of the exhibition was 'to expose the imperial ideology of the people - Canadian soldiers and missionaries - who had [...] brought back to Canada many African objects which, over time, found their way into the museum' (Hutcheon, 1994: 208). It was hoped that, in *foregrounding* the ways museums conventionally fortified the hegemony of colonialism by collecting and displaying objects taken from the colonies, the museum itself might be subject to critique as an institution that furthered colonialist epistemology. This involved ironising both the exhibits displayed, and the institutional space where they appeared. Exhibits were accompanied by written texts that endeavoured to reveal, and question, colonialist epistemology by commenting critically upon the displayed objects. An example concerned a room full of indigenous African cultural products that included drums, masks, and textiles. Attached to each was a sign that explained how the artefacts were being 'displayed according to their 'function' or 'form' in a way that would be quite familiar to late nineteenth-century museum goers, but not the people who made them. The things are theirs, the arrangement is not' (cited in Hutcheon, 1994: 216). The sign was intended to foreground the role of the exhibition in mediating specific images of other cultures. For Hutcheon, these strategies made the exhibition classifiable as 'postmodern' (Hutcheon, 1994: 206), because they thwarted the assumption that the collection provided 'scientificity and authority' (Hutcheon, 1994: 211); that is, reliable, unprejudiced

representations of African culture. The intentions behind mounting the exhibition for the purposes of critique made it 'postcolonial' (Hutcheon, 1994: 209) as it purposefully dissented from colonialist ideology. Furthermore, the exhibition aimed to promote a critical perspective on both a specific history, the colonising of Africa, and a certain historiographical form, the museum, that was alert to those subject to representation by the colonisers. The construction of this ironic, reflexive display attempted to rewrite history, dissenting from preceding representations of the colonial rule of Africa that legitimated the seizure of the displayed objects in the first place. However, contrary to expectations, not all the visitors left the exhibition aware of its intended critical stance. Hutcheon proposes that this was due to a breach between the strategies utilised in staging the collection - strategies, she claims, as postmodernist - and the oppositional politics motivated by a critical opinion of the colonialism of Africa. The perceived postmodern narrative strategies of self-reflexivity and irony did not guarantee that the display would be received as 'postcolonially oppositional' (Hutcheon, 1994: 222), nor effect a rewriting of the history of colonised Africa. Many visitors missed the signs attached to the indigenous African products, and consequently failed to recognise the criticism of the colonisation and exhibition of Africa intended by the curators (Hutcheon, 1994: 218). A confluence between the postmodern, the postcolonial and history predicated a crisis: 'what began with good intentions ended with picketing by members of the African Canadian community, court injunctions against them by the museum, encounters between demonstrators and police' (Hutcheon, 1994: 208).

It is within the context of a tension between postmodernism and postcolonialism concerning the rewriting of history that I read the work of the novelists under study. Hutcheon's article points to the difficulties faced when a specific history is rewritten through postmodernist narrative strategies for the purposes of critique. I propose that the novels of J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Salman Rushdie occasion similar tensions in their rewriting of history. Each engages with postmodernist aesthetics. By destabilising existing representations of the past, and revealing the extent to which such representations are provisional rather than faithful images of a past, these writers refute conventional models of history. This involves transformations of form and content; that is, both the methods conventionally used to narrate history and the dominant impressions of a historical occasion are

scrutinised and questioned. The texts constitute rewritings rather than writings of history, as the emphasis on discovering new narrative methods and images of a particular past necessitates a departure from conventional versions. However, due to this emphasis on rewriting for the purposes of critique, the texts under study entertain an ambivalent and mobile relationship with postmodernism. There are anxieties concerning the consequences of embracing postmodernist aesthetics. These include the dissolving of a material referent into its signifying practices, and an inability to secure oppositional critique. These texts do not mobilise postmodern narrative strategies trustingly. Rather, relations are carefully negotiated between the text's critical agenda and its deployment of postmodernist narrative strategies.

It is important to grasp the particular position of the writers I study in this thesis. I approach their position through the concept of 'negotiation'. My understanding of the term 'negotiation' is informed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who has used it to define her critical practice. As she argues, 'I mean by negotiation [...] that one tries to change something that one is obliged to inhabit, since one is not working from the outside' (Spivak, 1990: 72). Spivak's attention to launching critique from within can be used to approach the position of the novelists under study. Their work is not produced at the once-colonised 'margins', but occupies a contradictory position within the 'centre'. The texts I examine in this thesis can certainly be situated within the body of contemporary British fiction, but they also exist at one remove from it. Randall Stevenson has suggested that contemporary British fiction is culturally diverse. It is a product of 'post-imperial Britain becoming increasingly a sort of spaghetti junction, heterogeneous styles and registers meeting, intertwining, competing or coalescing' (Stevenson, 1991: 35). The important term used here is 'heterogeneous'. The work of the novelists under study is part of contemporary British fiction, but it should not be homogenised with the fiction of other postmodernist writers such as Peter Ackroyd or Julian Barnes for reasons of cultural specificity. Farrell, Mo, Ishiguro and Rushdie occupy a particular position within contemporary postmodernist British fiction because of their cultural backgrounds. Although they mobilise postmodernism to dismantle conventional historiography, their work questions whether postmodernism complicates the production of new histories that bear witness to those hitherto silenced. These novels engage with the question that is often raised in debates concerning the

extent to which postmodern aesthetics support or complicate postcolonial critical practices. As we shall see, the attitudes to postmodernism range from muted enthusiasm to deep scepticism. My reading of the novels under study aims to identify this range of responses.

There are several reasons why I have chosen to study these particular novelists. As critics have spotted, there are overlapping concerns in their fiction that brings each into proximity with the other. Chris Ferns argues that the 'recent resurgence of historical fiction in Britain during the past two decades' (Ferns, 1987: 275) features, amongst others, the work of 'Timothy Mo, Salman Rushdie and J.G. Farrell' (Ferns, 1987: 275). Bruce King includes Mo, Ishiguro, and Rushdie in his list of novelists that constitute a 'new internationalism' (King, 1991a: 193) in contemporary British fiction. King argues that '[i]nstead of presenting England as being enamoured of its own navel, its Britishness, such literature has revealed another, quite different world both within and around it' (King, 1991a: 193-194). The themes articulated by Ferns and King are common to the work of each novelist I explore in this thesis. Their historical fiction focuses in particular upon 'Third World societies, the Commonwealth and immigrants to England' (King, 1991a: 193). Farrell's 'Empire Trilogy' fictionalises the end of British rule in Ireland, the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and the Japanese invasion of colonised Singapore in 1942. Mo's work ranges across London's Chinatown in the 1960s, the colonisation of Hong Kong in 1841, and the current Indonesian occupation of East Timor. Ishiguro's novels engage with the post-war fortunes of Japanese imperialism, and Britain's declining position in the post-war era. Rushdie's fiction depicts the fortunes of post-Independence India and Pakistan, as well as the contemporary British diaspora. Each novelist writes in English, and predominantly in Britain, although each also has a purchase upon another culture. I argue that these novelists constitute a particular juncture of contemporary fiction produced in Britain during the 1970s and the 1980s. Writing within Britain, these novelists in part examine moments in the history of the culture from which they are displaced. They also adopt critical perspectives upon Britain itself. Each novelist mobilises postmodern narrative strategies in his historical fiction, but deploys strategies that attempt to question, if not deflect, the consequences of postmodernist aesthetics.

Although these novelists constitute a specific juncture of contemporary fiction, I do not treat their writing as homogeneous. The attitudes they adopt towards postmodernism range from enthusiasm to antagonism. Each novelist's deployment of postmodern narrative strategies differs in degree. To take one example, whereas Farrell's novels certainly engage in part with postmodernist narrative techniques, they do not display the profusion typical of Rushdie's fiction. Similarly, each novelist's relationship with postcolonialism is idiosyncratic. They are all difficult to establish firmly as postcolonial writers. Current critical orthodoxies do not help. Farrell's Irish origins lead some to deny his fiction is postcolonial, despite the fact that contemporary Ireland can be, in David Lloyd's view, considered an exemplary postcolonial country (Lloyd, 1993: 7). Yet there is little disagreement that Mo's fiction is postcolonial, despite the fact that Hong Kong is still a British possession and has not achieved independence from British government in ways that Ireland, India, and Pakistan clearly have. Ishiguro's Japanese background might seem to place him outside of postcolonialism completely, whereas Rushdie's purchase upon India has led many critics to consider him a paradigmatic postcolonial novelist. It is reductive just to consult these novelists' countries of origin in making decisions about their postcoloniality because this misses their position between at least two cultures. In considering these novelists in relation to postcolonialism, I am using a particular model of postcolonialism derived from the work of Homi Bhabha. Bhabha's model accommodates these writers' displaced position within Britain. In a moment I will explain why Bhabha's work has influenced my approach in this thesis, and why I believe it is particularly appropriate to a discussion of these four novelists. But let me state from the beginning that I do not claim in this thesis a secure postcolonial identity for each novelist, nor do I subscribe to a homogenising model of postcolonialism. But the negotiations each novelist makes with postmodernist narrative strategies are commensurate with current critiques of postmodernism mounted in postcolonial studies, particularly concerning the issues of historical reference and oppositional critique. A reading of these novelists in this context must recognise that each novelist has peculiar, often tangential relations with postmodern and postcolonial practices. Bhabha's work in particular helps us to understand these complex relations. I hazard that the novelists'

tangential relations with postmodernism and postcolonialism make for interesting interventions in the debates concerning the confluence of postmodernism and postcolonialism.

For the remainder of this introduction, I wish to define some of the terms that inform my reading of the texts under study, and explain my understanding of the debate between postmodernism and postcolonialism that informs my textual analysis. As my approach to the potentially commodious discourses about postmodern and postcolonial practices is limited to discovering the extent to which their confluence enables the possibility of a critical history, it is to the concept of critical history that I first turn. By using the phrase 'critical history', I follow Nietzsche's definition of this term in his essay 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life'.¹ Nietzsche discriminates between three models of history: monumental history, antiquarian history, and critical history. A monumental history is one that chains together 'the great moments in the struggle of the human individual' (Nietzsche, 1983: 68) to produce an image of a past, linear in shape, that concerns itself only with moments of fundamental significance for mankind.² Antiquarian history is concerned with preserving the past at all costs and revering everything that has existed.³ Critical history acts as a necessary corrective to both monumental and antiquarian history, it seems, by challenging the homogeneity of the former and the obeisance to all things past in the latter. Critical history articulates a part of the past only to 'break up and dissolve' (Nietzsche, 1983: 75) its existing conceptions. A critical history is judgmental and produced for strategic reasons, making us

clear as to how unjust the existence of anything - a privilege, a caste, a dynasty, for example - is, and how greatly this thing deserves to perish. Then its past is regarded critically, then one takes a knife to its roots, then one cruelly tramples over every kind of piety. (Nietzsche, 1983: 76)

¹ The usefulness of Nietzsche's concept of critical history for approaching these novels is underlined by David W. Price's recent and fascinating article, 'Salman Rushdie's 'Use and Abuse of History' in *Midnight's Children*' (Price, 1994). Price's reading is informed by the models of history that Nietzsche constructs in 'The uses and disadvantages of history for life'. My understanding of Nietzsche's concept of critical history is indebted to Price's essay.

² Nietzsche is uncomfortable with '[h]ow much of the past would have to be overlooked if it was to produce that mighty effect' (Nietzsche, 1983: 69), and criticises monumental history for its homogenising of the past, 'making what is dissimilar look similar' (Nietzsche, 1983: 70).

³ Nietzsche criticises this model of history because '[e]verything old and past that enters [the antiquarian's] field of vision at all is in the end blandly taken to be equally worthy of reverence' (Nietzsche, 1983: 74). The 'relentless raking together of everything that has ever existed' (Nietzsche, 1983: 75) becomes an end in itself.

A Nietzschean critical history would be motivated by a demand that injustice and inequality be destroyed. It assists an adversarial politics, as it 'judges and condemns' (Nietzsche, 1983: 72) for oppositional purposes. The metaphor of taking a knife to the roots of history suggests an eradication of the fundamental principles upon which history rests.

In the realm of postmodern theory, the possibility of producing a critical history with recourse to postmodernism is a cause for concern.¹ According to Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner, a postmodernist is someone who 'claims that there are fundamental *changes in society and history* which require new theories and conceptions' (Best & Kellner, 1991: 30 - emphasis added). Focusing in particular on the theme of history articulated in this quotation, I suggest these changes can be understood in two ways. In the first, 'changes in history' signifies a shift from one historical epoch to a succeeding period that is fundamentally different. The second possibility develops the need for new models of history stressed at the end of the quotation. That is, there have also occurred changes to the ways that history is conceptualised and narrated. It is this second sense of 'changes in history' that preoccupies my approach to postmodernism. Of particular interest are ambivalent attitudes in postmodern theory concerning the problem of reference. As Allen Thiher remarks, reference can be understood as 'the relationship between language and the real, or more precisely, that order of the real that, exclusive of nature, we traditionally have called history' (Thiher, 1984: 188). Theories of postmodernism often call attention to the difficulties of signifying 'a common apprehension of the real' (Thiher, 1984: 188), for better or for worse. In the work of Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson, changes to conventional models of history can be seen to complicate the possibilities of historical reference. These complications are the cause of

¹ Any discussion of postmodernism requires some preliminary comments concerning terminology - as Hans Bertens warns, '[p]ostmodernism is an exasperating term, and so are postmodern, postmodernist, postmodernity, and whatever else one might come across in the way of derivation' (Bertens, 1995: 3). For the sake of clarity, I follow in this thesis Steven Connor's distinction between postmodernism and postmodernity suggested in his book *Postmodernist Culture*. As Connor outlines, 'postmodernism' best refers specifically to cultural aesthetics or practices, while 'postmodernity' signifies 'new forms of social, political and economic arrangement' (Connor, 1989: 27). Each term designates a separate sphere. As this thesis is more preoccupied with the various aesthetic practices signified by the term postmodernism, I have elected not to hyphenate the term (as in 'post-modernism') as I feel the hyphen is suited to signifying the break or rupture that has occurred between two epochs. Connor's distinction can be modified to clarify a distinction between 'postcolonial' and 'post-colonial'. I use the former to describe a cultural practice, and the latter to denote an historical period.

disagreements in postcolonial studies concerning the extent to which postmodernist aesthetics can facilitate the writing of a critical history.

The recent work of Lyotard¹ embraces the two senses of 'changes in history' identified previously. Lyotard explores a shift between historical epochs, and mounts a critique of the ways that historical events are conventionally signified. He suggests that the faith in the emancipatory and improving qualities of knowledge typical of modernity - the 'grand narrative' or metanarrative of modernity - no longer exists. In the postmodern condition, 'the grand narrative has lost its credibility' (Lyotard, 1984: 37). It has been succeeded by the proliferation of small, local legitimating narratives that are used to make provisional judgements about limited, specific situations, and cannot be totalised into a unitary scheme. Important to Lyotard's discrediting of grand narratives is a critique of conventional philosophies of history that adhere to a model of linear progress. In his essay 'Universal History and Cultural Differences', Lyotard asserts that Western thought during modernity was dominated by the 'idea of emancipation' (Lyotard, 1989: 315). This idea governed many philosophies of history and placed an emphasis on linear progress:

What we call philosophies of history, the great narratives by means of which we attempt to order the multitude of events, certainly argue this idea [of emancipation] in different ways: a Christian narrative in which Adam's sin is redeemed through love; the *Aufklärer* narrative of emancipation from ignorance and servitude thanks to knowledge and egalitarianism; the speculative narrative of the realization of the universal idea through the dialectic of the concrete; the Marxist narrative of emancipation from exploitation and alienation through the socialisation of labour; the capitalist narrative of emancipation from poverty through technical and industrial development. These various narratives [...] all situate the data supplied by events within the course of a history whose end, even if it is out of reach, is called freedom. (Lyotard, 1989: 315)

This lengthy passage emphasises that Lyotard finds unity between contrary political projects - such as Marxism and capitalism - at the level of structure. Each subscribes to a philosophy of history essential to modernity that emphasises a linear progression from one condition to

¹ In discussing Lyotard, I am mindful of Geoffrey Bennington's view that it is difficult to homogenise Lyotard's work into a consistent or coherent theory, a so-called 'Lyotardian' perspective. Bennington notes the 'intuitive difficulty of grasping an immediate obvious trajectory in [Lyotard's] diverse body of work' (Bennington, 1988: 1-2), and calls attention to how much of Lyotard's work often repudiates or supplements previous publications (Bennington, 1988: 2-3). My discussion of Lyotard, then, foregrounds a specific strand of his various and complex work that emerges between the late 1970s and early 1980s in two selected texts - *The Postmodern Condition* and *The Differend* - and in related essays that focus upon the major issues articulated in these texts.

another over time. If Lyotard argues that 'each of the great narratives of emancipation has, so to speak, been invalidated over the last fifty years' (Lyotard, 1989: 318), then it follows that the philosophy of a linear, progressive history has also been invalidated.

In *The Differend*, Lyotard attempts to discredit models of linear history precisely because they consolidate the functioning of metanarratives. He questions the ethics of metanarratives primarily by focusing upon the instance of the 'differend' (Lyotard, 1988: xi), defined as 'a conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments' (Lyotard, 1988: xi). The existence of differends highlights the lack of any universal value system - a metanarrative - that can be used to arbitrate between adversarial parties. A differend compels the dominant party to detect a different way of seeing beyond their epistemological limits, one that cannot be phrased through current idioms. In a key phrase, Lyotard argues for the necessity of 'bear[ing] witness to differends by finding idioms for them' (Lyotard, 1988: 13). Conventional idioms are ill-equipped for this task. Lyotard's theory of the differend engages with the many interpretations that can be made of historical events. Linear models of history ignore heterogeneous perspectives, and assert one perspective as authoritative. Lyotard challenges this way of deciding the meaning of an event by opening a gap between an historical event and its subsequent narration, as Bill Readings explains in his discussion of *The Differend*:

The event [...] happens in excess of the referential frame within which it might be understood, disrupting or displacing that frame. [...] The event is the radically singular happening which cannot be represented within a general history without the loss of its singularity, its reduction to a moment. The time of the event is postmodern in that the event cannot be understood *at the time*, as it happens, because its singularity is alien to the language or structure of understanding to which it occurs. (Readings, 1991: 57)

As Readings clarifies, an event cannot be represented adequately by conventional idioms, as those idioms would convey that event through a prevailing structure of linguistic differences, writing the event through established concepts unable to signify fully the singularity of what has happened.¹

¹ Lyotard's work concerning differends coincides with his definition of postmodernism in his essay 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?' For Lyotard, postmodernism is an aesthetic of the sublime. It registers the failure of the imagination to present an object 'which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept. We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what is), but we do not have the

Lyotard's concept of the singularity of the event throws into question the extent to which historical events can be made present in conventional narrative models. His work foregrounds how images of reality are themselves narrative conventions, fashioned by rather than reflected in language. 'Nothing can be said about reality that does not presuppose it' (Lyotard, 1988: 32), he argues. Lyotard prefers the term 'referent' to signify those presuppositions that constitute a notion of reality as 'a unanimously agreed-upon protocol' (Lyotard, 1988: 4). He attacks positivism for 'confus[ing] reality and referent' (Lyotard, 1988: 28). However, his theorising of the difference between reality and referent complicates the ability to bear witness to the singularity of the event. Lyotard's assertion that all narratives presuppose reality by producing referents, and are not mimetic of a given reality, succumb to a totalising logic Lyotard would condemn as native to modernity. As Steven Connor remarks, Lyotard's work effects an 'homogenisation of what one essay quaintly calls 'the flood of human events' into *language* itself' (Connor, 1992: 111). It is difficult to maintain distinctions between referent and reality if language is used as the primary metaphor of all knowledge. How would one tell apart adequately reality from the referent, and know for sure that one was bearing witness? In short, Lyotard's critique of linear models of historiography is productive insofar as it renders them ideologically suspect. Yet, by prioritising language in his approach to bearing witness to historical events, Lyotard is in danger of positioning reality beyond the reach of signifying practices, complicating the possibility of establishing historical reference.

In Jean Baudrillard's recent work, *The Illusion of the End*, the dissolving of the referent into its signifying practices becomes a source of conscious anxiety.¹ This book marks something of a reversal in Baudrillard's attitudes to the status of reality. In his earlier work, Baudrillard declares enthusiastically the death of reality and the end of history.² But in *The*

capacity to show an example of it' (Lyotard, 1984: 78). Postmodernism denies 'the solace of good forms, the consensus of taste' (Lyotard, 1984: 81), and instead searches for 'new presentations' (Lyotard, 1984: 81) that escape the confines of convention. I read Lyotard's critique of conventional models of linear history as part of the 'war on totality' (Lyotard, 1984: 82) that characterises his aesthetics of postmodernism.

¹ Although Baudrillard rarely uses the term 'postmodernism', critics do place him at the vanguard of postmodern theory. Mike Gane has called him 'the high priest of postmodernism' (Gane, 1993: 21).

² Baudrillard's work is often read as neutralising the distinctions between various dominant and emergent political groups, propounding a postmodernism that ignores social inequalities and the need for an emancipatory political project. As Douglas Kellner succinctly argues, 'Baudrillard's world [is] one of dramatic implosion, in which classes, genders, political differences, and once autonomous realms of

Illusion of the End he seems unusually concerned with this scenario. His account of 'changes in history' concerns the transformation of history's signification. Baudrillard argues that the intense velocity of the circulation of information in the mass media has caused a rupture in the ways we experience historical events. Just as a rocket can break out of the earth's atmosphere by achieving a specific velocity, so too has information reached an extreme speed of circulation in the media that forces it to escape the 'referential sphere of the real and history' (Baudrillard, 1994: 1). The possibility of tracing sequential logic between events has been forfeited. There is no longer the ability to achieve historical hindsight, a time both to reflect on historical events and trace a structure of cause and effect between them. Events appear to exist nebulously. Technological sophistication has created a 'short-circuit between cause and effect' (Baudrillard, 1994: 6). Temporal distinctions between past, present and future - fundamental to linear, progressive narratives of history - are replaced by the ubiquity of a perpetual present, where these distinctions can no longer be made. As Baudrillard suggests in an earlier version of this argument, history 'implodes into the here and now' (Baudrillard, 1986: 21). For these reasons, it is not possible to write narratives of history that supply a sequential explanatory framework within which events follow each other and derive significance:

So far as history is concerned, its telling has become impossible because that telling (*re-citatum*) is, by definition, the possible recurrence of a sequence of meanings. Now, through the impulse for total dissemination and circulation, every event is granted its own liberation; every fact becomes atomic, nuclear, and pursues its trajectory in the void. This is how it is able to achieve a velocity of no-return which carries it out of history once and for all. (Baudrillard, 1994: 2)

Through the proliferation of representations of events that circulate so quickly in the mass media, it becomes impossible to fix the event in time and space for long enough to link events together into a narrative chain. Baudrillard turns his analysis of the epistemological problems of writing history into an ontological crisis concerning the status of the historical event.¹ The endless reproduction of an event in the mass media is perceived as annihilating its ontological

society and culture implode[...] into each other, erasing boundaries and differences in a postmodern kaleidoscope' (Kellner, 1995: 297).

¹ I am following here Christopher Norris's suggestion in *Uncritical Theory* that Baudrillard's work generally makes slippages between epistemological and ontological concerns (Norris, 1992: 122).

security, as it becomes impossible to secure the reality of the event independent of its representations. Baudrillard concludes, then, that 'we are leaving history to move into the realm of simulation' (Baudrillard, 1994: 7).¹ History has dissolved into its reproductions to the extent that its actuality becomes impossible to substantiate. As he argues elsewhere, the end of a sense of a progressive, linear history is a defining feature of postmodernity:

Postmodernity is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It is a game with the vestiges of what has been destroyed. That is why we are 'post-': history has stopped, one is in a kind of post-history which is without meaning. One would not be able to find any meaning in it [...] We can no longer be said to progress. (Gane, 1993: 95)

Critics of Baudrillard are sometimes impatient with his joyful celebration of simulations and fragmentation.² However, *The Illusion of the End* displays unexpected anxieties that complicate Baudrillard's view of history. He seems unsettled by the damaging consequences of dissolving history into representation, with the result that any representation of the past can be constructed at will. Baudrillard argues that the fragmentation of history into countless simulations devoid of a fixed referent betokens a worrying outcome, as this enables the swift removal of unsavoury moments in twentieth-century history from the historical record. Today people are

reviewing everything, rewriting everything, restoring everything, face-lifting everything, to produce, as it seems, in a burst of paranoia a perfect set of accounts at the end of the century, a universally positive balance sheet (the reign of human rights over the whole planet, democracy everywhere, the definitive obliteration of conflict and, if possible, the obliteration of all 'negative' events from our memories) [...]. (Baudrillard, 1994: 12)

For Baudrillard, all events are now equally open to a 'blanket revisionism' (Baudrillard, 1994: 22) that ignores the 'singularity' (Baudrillard, 1994: 12) of each event. He argues that an event is 'irreversible [as] there is always something in it which exceeds meaning and interpretation'

¹ Simulation is a central term in Baudrillard's discourse. It describes the dominance of the representation of an object, behind which it is impossible to determine the precise object itself. A simulation is an image that is not tethered to an object, and is devoid of a fixed referent. As Baudrillard explains, '[t]o dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence' (Baudrillard, 1988: 167). Simulation takes representation to radical extremes because it assaults the view that any representation corresponds to an objective reality.

² For example, Christopher Norris argues that Baudrillard's fully-fledged assault on the categories of reality, history and rationality is a positively 'Orwellian prognosis' (Norris, 1990: 191), a nightmare scenario that denies the application of individual judgement grounded in a criteria of truth and falsehood.

(Baudrillard, 1994: 13). The stress on irreversibility betrays Baudrillard's attempt at securing events beyond the limits of language; they cannot simply be made to disappear by omitting an event from a historical narrative. If events are treated as reversible, then the event loses its specificity; it can mean anything and nothing due its capacity for limitless interpretation. This results in a process Baudrillard calls the 'democratic rewriting of history' (Baudrillard, 1994: 43), a phenomenon he asserts as more frightening than 'the totalitarian (Stalinist) rewriting of the past' (Baudrillard, 1994: 43). By making available all historical events for unlimited interpretation, certain historical occurrences can be forgotten completely: 'Everyone committed to liquidation! Eliminating the planet's blackspots as one might eliminate traffic accident blackspots, as we might eliminate spots from a face' (Baudrillard, 1994: 43). Baudrillard sounds a warning about the fate of history in postmodernist aesthetics. Opening history to revision, it seems, can be coterminous with a massive exercise in historical forgetting that covers over previous conflicts and serves the interests of one particular ideological formation. Baudrillard's comments are important, because the problem he identifies with opening history up to endless 'democratic' rewritings is faced squarely by the writers I study in this thesis.

An anxiety concerning the infinite interpretations of history enabled by postmodernism also concerns Fredric Jameson. In *The Political Unconscious*, he raises his concerns about the extent to which recent critical thought has created a scenario where

History, in the bad sense - the reference to a 'context' or a 'ground,' an external real world of some kind, the reference, in other words, to the much maligned 'referent' itself - is simply *one more text among others*, something found in the history manuals and the chronological presentation of sequences so often called 'linear history.' (Jameson, 1981: 35 - emphasis added)

Jameson argues for the ontological specificity of 'the text of history' (Jameson, 1981: 34) in order to maintain its particular relations with the referent, as the dissolving of history into textuality necessarily disqualifies the formulation of critique. However, the emergence of late capitalism¹ has effected a cultural logic, postmodernism, that makes available a situation where

¹ Jameson sketches the features of late capitalism as variously including 'the new international division of labour, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges [...], new forms of media interrelationship [...], computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale' (Jameson, 1991: xix).

history is just one more text among others. Postmodernism, Jameson suggests, neutralises the possibility of assuming a critical position to the past due to a 'weakening of historicity both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality' (Jameson, 1991: 6). This weakening of historicity has consequences for historical reference. Jameson makes a move reminiscent of Baudrillard¹ by positing simulacra as one of postmodernism's defining traits. A simulacrum is 'the identical copy for which no original has ever existed' (Jameson, 1991: 18); that is, an image devoid of an object that functions as its primary referent, conventionally giving the image referential depth. Instead, 'depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces' (Jameson, 1991: 12) as a plethora of images circulate throughout culture, devoid of stable referents. Texts of history come to function in precisely this way, as postmodernism redefines history as collection of images amputated from the referent. Postmodernism refashions history as 'a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum' (Jameson, 1991: 18). Consequently, 'the past as "referent" finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts' (Jameson, 1991: 18). This is precisely the unsavoury scenario that Jameson wrote against in *The Political Unconscious*. The text of history has lost its imminent relationship with reality. In postmodernism, historical simulacra are available for countless acts of 'cannibalisation' (Jameson, 1991: 18) and reproduction. But their availability precludes the possibility of connecting images of the past to a referent, grounding the text of history in material conditions. A situation emerges where the production of history increases, yet those productions are weightless simulacra. Jameson declares the emergence of paradox where 'the well-known lack of historicity has apparently generated any number of "returns to history" ' (Jameson, 1991: 387) that are ultimately futile. This futility is registered as a shock, as we are 'slowly becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach' (Jameson, 1991: 25). The subversion and rewriting of previous images of history are made available at precisely the moment the text of history loses its powers of reference.

¹ Jameson acknowledges in his closing remarks to *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* that his formulation of postmodernism owes 'a great debt' (Jameson, 1991: 399) to Baudrillard's work.

Postmodernism sanctions a 'new free play with the past' (Jameson, 1991: 368) that remains 'allergic to the priorities and commitments, let alone the responsibilities, of the various tediously committed kinds of partisan history' (Jameson, 1991: 369).

As the work of Lyotard, Baudrillard and Jameson evidences, the status of history in postmodernism is perplexing. Whether 'changes in history' are considered positive, as in Lyotard's work, or counter-productive, as in the thought of Baudrillard and especially Jameson, the possibility of a referential history is put in jeopardy by each version of postmodernism. In each, problems of reference emerge that damage the possibility of establishing critique. It is this which makes some postcolonial critics sceptical about the usefulness of engaging with postmodernist aesthetics, particularly because history is fundamental in definitions of postcolonialism. Helen Tiffin proposes that 'postcolonialism' denotes 'writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience of European expansion into and exploitation of 'the other' worlds' (Tiffin, 1988: 170). Her definition emphasises that postcolonialism presumes a specific history, functioning as a material referent, that can be approached through the interpretative processes of reading and writing. Like postmodernists, critics of postcolonialism also question conventional models of history. As Helen Tiffin further argues:

Since the history of post-colonial territories, was, until recently, largely a narrative constructed by the coloniser, its fictions, and the language(s) in which they are written, operate as a means to cultural control [...] the European 'master-narrative' of history will always seek to contain and confine post-colonial self-interpretation.¹ (Tiffin, 1988: 173)

Postcolonial critics and writers are faced with a body of historical texts that operate paradoxically. On the one hand, they bear witness to the existence of colonialism, and the system of hierarchical differences that was created in its service. On the other, such histories represent that past with recourse to an epistemology common to the colonisers that does not bear witness to the voices of those colonised. For this reason, many postcolonial writers are faced with the task of re-negotiating historiography, revealing its conventional forms to be

¹ Tiffin attaches the following note to this quotation: 'I include [in the phrase 'master narrative'] all European historical and fictional writing which interprets the colonised and recounts 'events' of the imperial/colonial dialectic within the terms of its own epistemology and ontology' (Tiffin, 1988: 180).

typical of colonial epistemology. Using the phrase 'revisionist histories' (Maxwell, 1994: 71) to refer to postcolonial critiques of conventional historical narratives, Anne Maxwell argues that revisionist historians 'make it their business to trace the hidden links between the writing and production of empirical history and the maintenance of global regimes based on colonization' (Maxwell, 1994: 71). These postcolonial practices, I believe, can be usefully described with recourse to Nietzsche's definition of critical history - one that makes judgements about a past previously regarded with piety, taking 'a knife to its roots' (Nietzsche, 1981: 81) in an attempt to challenge its authority.

By problematising the process of historical reference, postmodernism might seem to have much to offer a postcolonial critical practice. Stephen Slemon argues that

the extent to which we are able to see history as language, as discourse, as a way of seeing, or a code of recognition is also the extent to which we are able to destabilise history's fixity, its givenness, and open it up to the transformative power of imaginative revision. (Slemon, 1988: 159)

Theories of colonial and postcolonial discourse have been heavily influenced by an awareness of the role of representation in both the maintenance and contestation of colonial power. This makes representation important to the refusal of colonial historiography as, by revealing the strategic interests of colonial histories, a subversion of their truth-claims can be effected. For these reasons, postcolonial practices have affinities with certain objects of postmodern critique. For example, Simon During has used Lyotard's work to accentuate the differences between colonial and postcolonial epistemologies. During presents colonialism as a form of metanarrative that, through its hegemony, allows the West to place 'colonised peoples in a *differend*' (During, 1987: 40). He proposes that Lyotard's thesis of the 'end of metanarratives' potentially enables colonised peoples to phrase their experience in ways that refute the linear and progressivist assumptions of conventional narratives of emancipation:

There is here hope that the breakdown of legitimations for cultural imperialism will free the world both from the spell of instrumental reason and from the nostalgia for mythic origins. It is as if postmodernity would today be the play of post-colonialisms set free not only from the requirement of universality embedded in emancipation, but also from the hunger of identity implicit in narrative as myth. (During, 1987: 41)

During believes the efficacy of Lyotard's theory for postcolonial practices is tempered by its blindness towards cultural specificity. Lyotard's conception of language transcends cultural differences and fails to accommodate a 'material sense' (During, 1987: 43) of language that is fundamental to many postcolonial practices. During's criticism of Lyotard can be read as indicating a crucial problem for those postcolonial writers that use postmodernist aesthetics. Although a postmodernist critique of representation might assist with postcolonial critical projects, there exists the danger that postmodernism could damage the impact of those projects. On the issue of formulating postcolonial critical histories, postmodernist aesthetics might go as far as conceiving of the geographical and historical referent vital to many postcolonial writers as just another kind of text available for limitless interpretation, while, as During warns, disregarding the materiality of all textuality. Postmodernism would complicate the writing of postcolonial critical histories that required a vital ontological security for their referents. Indeed, in another essay, During is hostile to postmodernism, and argues that postcolonial writing operates 'by accepting and using those practices and concepts (representation, history, evaluation) which postmodernism most strenuously denies' (During, 1985: 369).

For this reason, postcolonial critics are divided over the productivity of postmodernism. The opposition to postmodernism is represented in Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin's introduction to *After Europe*, a book of essays about the relations between postcolonial practices and poststructuralist literary theory. Their argument raises a series of concerns about the possibility of creating oppositional postcolonial practices with recourse to some of the assumptions they believe to be inherent in *both* postmodernism and poststructuralism:¹

th[e] suspension of the referent in the literary sign, and the 'crisis of representation' which has followed in its wake, has effected within the dominant forms of Anglo-American post-structuralist theory a wholesale retreat from geography and history into a domain of pure 'textuality' in which the

¹ Although Slemon and Tiffin critique the 'the post-structuralist refutation of the referent' (Slemon and Tiffin, 1989: xi), it is clear that they, and other postcolonial critics, sometimes make the assumption that poststructuralism and postmodernism are homologous. In a different essay, Helen Tiffin conflates postmodernism and poststructuralism on the grounds that both 'take issue with the precepts of Saussurian [*sic*] linguistic structuralism' (Tiffin, 1988: 170). Such conflation runs counter to the argument of Andreas Huyssen, who argues convincingly that poststructuralism is focused primarily on modernism and has a tangential relationship with postmodernism. He believes 'we must insist on the fundamental non-identity' of poststructuralism and postmodernism, as 'poststructuralism offers a theory of modernism, not a theory of the postmodern' (Huyssen, 1984: 45). For the moment, it is the tenor of Slemon and Tiffin's argument, not its relative accuracy, that is significant in the present context.

principle of indeterminacy smothers the possibility of social or political 'significance' for literature. (Slemon and Tiffin, 1989: x)

Postcolonial practices find themselves sharing affinities with an aesthetic that ultimately invalidates the grounds upon which an oppositional history depends. However, Slemon and Tiffin do not condemn theory, as they believe it 'remains a potentially enabling mechanism for furthering the continuing practice of post-colonial critical resistance into new vectors' (Slemon and Tiffin, 1989: xvi). The tone of their essay modulates between hostility and indecision, and their argument remains guarded and inconclusive. A less indecisive, but continually guarded, approach to the compatibility of postmodern and postcolonial practices is voiced by themselves and others in *Past the Last Post*, a collection of essays that attends to the relations between postmodern and postcolonial literary practices. The collapse of geography and history into pure textuality is again deemed to be characteristically postmodernist. Stephen Slemon's contribution, 'Modernism's Last Post', is typical in its argument that postcolonial practices often accept 'a mimetic or referential purchase to textuality' tied to a 'crucial strategy for survival in marginalised social groups' (Slemon, 1991: 5). Postcolonial critical practices would be somewhat contradictory, he argues, as they would be influenced by 'poststructuralism's suspension of the referent' (Slemon, 1991: 5) at the same time as reinstalling the referent 'in the service of colonised and post-colonised societies' (Slemon, 1991: 5). Slipping again from poststructuralism to postmodernism, Slemon delineates postcolonial critical practices as advocating a limited form of ontological doubt that protects the referent from its diffusion into pure textuality:

if the question of representation really is grounded in a 'crisis' within post-modern Western society under late capitalism, in post-colonial critical discourse it necessarily bifurcates under a dual agenda: which is to continue the resistance to (neo) colonialism through a deconstructive reading of its rhetoric *and* to retrieve and reinscribe those post-colonial social traditions that in literature issue forth on a thematic level, and within a realist problematic, as issues of cultural identity and survival. (Slemon, 1991: 5)

Slemon's advocacy of a 'realist problematic' sums up well the attempt to safeguard a discourse that maintains links between language and reality, at the same time as recognising the fragility of those links. But his trope of bifurcation implies splitting, rather than conjunction, between

postmodernism and postcolonialism. In a more sophisticated essay, Linda Hutcheon finds 'strong and clear links' (Hutcheon, 1991: 168) between postmodern and postcolonial discourses. Both discourses are keen to attack notions such as the autonomous subject and claims for universal truths, while postmodernism's 'respect [for] the particular and the local' (Hutcheon, 1991: 171) is a valuable lesson for a postcolonial critic to learn. Both, in her view, mobilise the trope of irony to subvert the authority of dominant forms of representation. Yet, she too concludes that the differences between postmodern and postcolonial practices are ultimately political. Whereas postcolonial writers construct new identities, histories and languages through which postcolonial experiences can emerge from a hitherto silenced condition, postmodernism is devoid of any inherent political agenda. For Hutcheon, '[t]he postcolonial, like the feminist, is a dismantling but also constructive political enterprise insofar as it implies a theory of agency and social change that the postmodern deconstructive impulse lacks' (Hutcheon, 1991: 183). Postmodernism remains 'politically ambivalent' (Hutcheon, 1991: 168).

If some critics argue that postmodernism negates the grounds for critical histories, others represent postmodernism as a form of neo-colonialism. According to this view, the hegemony of Western epistemology is preserved by reading postcolonial literature as contributing primarily to the crisis of the grand narratives of the West. This necessarily tethers postcolonial literature to the traditional colonial centres. For some, the location of postcolonial writing in relation to postmodernism keeps in place the colonial relation of master and slave that this writing should challenge. Helen Tiffin configures the relations between postcolonialism and postmodernism in these terms:

Post-modernism, whether characterised as temporal or topological, originates in Europe, or more specifically, operates as a Euro-American western hegemony, whose global appropriation of time-and-place inevitably proscribes certain cultures as backward and marginal while co-opting to itself certain of their cultural 'raw' materials. Post-modernism is then projected onto these margins as normative, as a neo-universalism to which 'marginal' cultures may aspire, and from which certain of their more forward-looking products might be appropriated and 'authorised.' (Tiffin, 1991: viii)

Tiffin's point is important because it calls attention to the many contexts that exist for the variety and diversity of postcolonial literature. An understanding of postcolonial writing as assaulting the West's legitimating metanarratives is only one such context, but it is not the only

one and not always the most important.¹ In short, the assumption that postcolonial literature is always writing back to the centre may continue the privileging of the West that occurs in colonial discourse. But the bifurcation between postmodernism and postcolonialism that arises from the arguments stated above perhaps elides the position of writers working within the West. As I argued above, Farrell, Mo, Ishiguro and Rushdie occupy this position. To different degrees, these writers adopt a guarded approach to postmodernism for reasons similar to those that worry Tiffin, Slemon, During and Hutcheon. But their work is certainly tethered to the West. For this reason, I believe Homi Bhabha's configuration of postmodern and postcolonial practices is the most productive in grasping the related positions of the writers under study. Bhabha brings together the postmodern and the postcolonial in order to open a space that is linked to the critique of the grand narratives of the West. The productivity of such a space for the construction of a critical historiography preoccupies the novelists under study. Each writer explores the possibility of clearing a space where a critical history can be voiced, one that bears witness to those marginalised in received histories.

Let me demonstrate how Bhabha seeks to open this particular space of possibility at the conjunction of postmodernism and postcolonialism, where the voices of those silenced in conventional history can emerge. Whereas Tiffin and others seek to cut the connection between 'Western' postmodernism and postcolonial literary practices, Bhabha locates his model of postcolonialism squarely within the terms of the current critique of the grand narratives of the West. There is an important connection between Bhabha's work on postmodern and postcolonial relations and his theorising of colonial discourse that requires some initial comment. Much of Bhabha's work concerns the apparently binary power relations between colonial self and other in colonial discourse. However, Bhabha refuses such binary logic by locating an ambivalence that disrupts its authority. As Robert Young explains, ambivalence is posited as a product of 'the attempt to fix the colonised as an object of knowledge' (Young, 1990: 147). This means that 'the relation of power [between coloniser and colonised] becomes

¹ For example, Aijaz Ahmad vents frustration at Western critics who assume literature produced in former colonies is always concerned first and foremost with the West. He argues that 'I do not know of any fictional narrative in Urdu, in roughly the last two hundred years, which is of any significance and any length (I am making an exception for a few short stories here) in which the issue of colonialism or the difficulty of a civilisational encounter between the English and the Indian has the same primacy as, for example, in Forster's *A Passage to India* or Paul Scott's *Raj Quarter*' (Ahmad, 1992: 118).

much more equivocal' (Young, 1990: 147) than is suggested by a binary model of power relations. Bhabha returns constantly to 'the image of the post-Enlightenment man tethered to, *not* confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of the colonised man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being' (Bhabha, 1994: 44). Bhabha's attention to the tethering of coloniser to colonised is of importance. One such example occurs in his chapter 'Of Mimicry and Man'. Here, Bhabha focuses upon the 'mimic man', the colonial subject educated in the language and culture of the colonising West. The mimic man unsettles the binary opposition of colonial self and colonised other. He occupies an ambivalent position between difference and resemblance. In one respect his identity is fixed as fundamentally different from the colonising subject. But his knowledge of the colonisers' language and culture disavows that difference. Bhabha describes the mimic man as partial presence, a '*subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' (Bhabha, 1994: 86). As Robert Young summarises, when confronted with the colonised subject 'the coloniser sees a grotesquely displaced image of himself [...] [t]he surveilling eye is suddenly confronted with a returning gaze of otherness and finds that its mastery, its sameness, is undone' (Young, 1990: 147). Colonial discourse is haunted by an indeterminacy that interrupts the functioning of its power. Through mimicry the 'civilising mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double' (Bhabha, 1994: 86). The coloniser confronts a partial presence - the same, but not quite - that disrupts the authority of colonial discourse and provides the colonising subject with subversive agency. The ambivalent disruption of colonial discourse occurs interstitially - between coloniser and colonised, derision and desire, difference and resemblance. Resulting from Bhabha's work on identity is 'a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification that occurs precisely in the elliptical *in-between*, where the shadow of the other falls upon the self' (Bhabha, 1994: 60).

Although Bhabha refutes the binary logic of colonial discourse, there remains in place the circuit of power relations that keeps the coloniser and colonised tethered. My point is that Bhabha configures the postmodern and the postcolonial in very similar terms. The postcolonial texts that feature in his criticism (including work by Toni Morrison and Salman Rushdie) are always located in an ambivalent circuit that binds them to the disruption of the master narratives

of Western epistemology. Within this circuit an ambivalent, interstitial space is discovered that is assumed to be productive. Bhabha shares Lyotard's affirmative sense of the end of the grand narratives of Western modernity. Sensing perhaps the potential vacuity of postmodernist aesthetics, Bhabha aims to 'rename the postmodern from the position of the postcolonial' (Bhabha, 1994: 175). Postmodernism is presented as enabling those deemed marginal to bear witness to their hitherto silenced histories:

if the interest in postmodernism is limited to a celebration of the fragmentation of the 'grand narratives' of postenlightenment [*sic*] rationalism then, for all its intellectual excitement, it remains a profoundly parochial enterprise.

The wider significance of the postmodern condition lies in the awareness that the epistemological 'limits' of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices - women, the colonised, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities. (Bhabha, 1994: 4-5)

The end of grand narratives licenses the production of new histories by those previously silenced. But these new histories are ultimately tethered to the West. Bhabha argues that the West 'must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative *internal to its narrative identity*' (Bhabha, 1994: 6). The purpose of these new dissident histories seems primarily the redefinition of Western knowledge. This begs the question whether these newly authorised voices are ever completely free from the hegemony of the traditional colonial centres. They seem to function like the mimic man. They split the authority of the West by rewriting its history as an ambivalent shadow of its former self. Indeed, Bhabha locates the postcolonial at an ambivalence space between both colonising and the colonised positions. Just as the tethering of coloniser and colonised subjects produced a mode of subversion that emerged from a space in-between, so too does the unequal encounter between two cultures facilitate an interstitial space of possibility:

The postcolonial perspective - as it is being developed by cultural historians and literary theorists - departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or 'dependency' theory. As a mode of analysis, it attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces the recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres. (Bhabha, 1994: 173)

A space of possibility is opened interstitially and claimed as the location of the postcolonial. In this model, the postcolonial does not exist outside of the circuit marked by the polarities of coloniser and colonised. It emerges at an ambivalent space in-between a structure of opposition. This is a particular kind of postcolonial perspective, one that preserves the tethering of the colonised to the colonising cultures while recognising within this relationship the room for subversion.

Bhabha must be criticised for assuming this particular postcolonial perspective is universal. He threatens to homogenise a vast and varied terrain of cultural practices. As I noted above, not all postcolonial practices can be explained in terms of the critique of the West's grand narratives. But his version of the 'postcolonial perspective' is suited to a discussion of the novelists under study, and I believe it is indicative of a specific field of postcolonialism that circumscribes the work of Farrell, Mo, Ishiguro and Rushdie. These novelists similarly explore the extent to which a space exists at the juncture of postmodernism and postcolonialism where a range of dissonant, dissident histories emerge. Although it may be politically important to remove some postcolonial literature from the context of postmodernist aesthetics in some cases, that bifurcation is not appropriate for this range of contemporary fiction. In this particular case it would deny the specificity of the writing under study. These writers negotiate from within Western epistemology in an attempt to clear a space where new histories can emerge.

The relationship between Bhabha's work and the fiction under study forms a dynamic circuit of its own. I will be returning throughout this thesis to Bhabha's conceptualisation of the postcolonial perspective, and the interstitial space of possibility he theorises. But the novels under study also enable a critique of Bhabha's argument. Each novelist mobilises postmodernism in order to discover if a similar space is opened where a new, critical historiography is effected. However, not all the writers in this thesis are as optimistic as Bhabha about the existence and the promise of this space. In my conclusion I will gather together the range of attitudes towards postmodernism that I explore in the following chapters, and suggest they enable a criticism of Bhabha's work. But I now commence with my

examination of the ways J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie explore the consequences of postmodernist aesthetics for the creation of an adversarial, critical history.

Chapter One:

J.G. Farrell and the Symbolic Resources of Empire

J.G. Farrell's historical novels - often called the 'Empire Trilogy'¹ - have been read in two contrary ways. On the one hand, some critics consider them as realist texts that do not call attention to their own fictional processes. Malcolm Bradbury is rather disparaging in his comment that they 'did little to advance the novel as a self-aware form' (Bradbury, 1987: 101), and readily succumbed to 'that gravitational tug of realism which so much great modern writing had already tested' (Bradbury, 1987: 101). Randall Stevenson agrees that Farrell's novels are '[r]ealist in method' (Stevenson, 1986: 147). In contrast, others have identified elements in these texts that do not belong to literary realism and seem typical of more experimental fiction. Prabhu S. Gupta has compared Farrell's style to the work of 'Nabokov and Beckett' (Gupta: 1986: 921). Richard Todd argues that J.G. Farrell's 'Empire Trilogy' is characterised by a fictional self-consciousness he believes is characteristic of postmodernism:

Novels such as *Troubles* (1970), *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), and *The Singapore Grip* (1978) are scrupulously carefully [*sic*] researched, yet rescued from any threat of rigidity by the subtle and comic use of stylistically foregrounded codes, such as the gothic and the cinematic. The effect is that of an historical realism tempered [...] by an arguably more Postmodernist combination of the fantastic and the inscrutable. (Todd, 1986: 112)

Todd's notion of tempered realism echoes the views of Bernard Bergonzi, who steers a path between contrary approaches to Farrell's novels. Bergonzi argues that the repudiation of realism in much post-war British and American fiction perhaps makes available to the contemporary novelist a new kind of realism, not 'an inevitable or habitual cultural mode, but one possibility to be freely chosen by the novelist - out of a full knowledge of all the possible choices he might make. It would be a reflective realism, aware of the conventionality of fiction, whilst open to the world of experience' (Bergonzi, 1979: 228). Bergonzi argues that Farrell's

¹ For example, Neil McEwan's chapter on Farrell's work is titled 'J.G. Farrell: Empire Trilogy' (McEwan, 1987:124-158). Farrell is also the author of three novels that appeared before the Empire Trilogy was published - *A Man From Elsewhere* (1963), *The Lung* (1965) and *A Girl in the Head* (1969). At the time of writing, all three are out of print. In October 1991, HarperCollins publishers confirmed to me in a letter that they had no plans to reprint Farrell's early work. An unfinished novel, *The Hill Station*, was published in 1981, along with Farrell's 'Indian Diary' that records his travels through India while researching *The Siege of Krishnapur*. Farrell also published one short story in *Atlantis*, 'The Pussycat Who Fell in Love with the Suitcase' (1973/4).

style is precisely indicative of this new 'conscious realism' (Bergonzi, 1979: 228).

Like Todd and Bergonzi, my reading of Farrell's 'Empire Trilogy' is alert to those elements that are not normally regarded as realist. As I am dissatisfied with the views of Stevenson and Bradbury, I focus particularly upon the strategic use of metafictional narrative strategies in Farrell's novels. Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as 'fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically calls attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality' (Waugh, 1984: 2). Farrell's novels, I argue, mobilise metafictional narrative strategies, but for purposes more specific than these. The metafictional elements in the 'Empire Trilogy' are mobilised to challenge the symbolic resources of the British Empire. David Trotter uses the term 'symbolic resources' to signify 'the ideals and fantasies which made [colonialism], for so many people, the right (indeed the only) vocation to pursue' (Trotter, 1990: 4). Farrell's novels displace these symbolic resources and interrupt the perpetuation of colonialist epistemology.

However, the metafictional elements in Farrell's work are also the source of problems. To label Farrell's historical fiction as postmodernist is perhaps rather provocative. In the light of Todd's comments, it is more accurate to say that Farrell's work is characterised *in part* by its deployment of postmodern narrative strategies. Linda Hutcheon's definition of postmodernist fiction appears appropriate to a reading of Farrell's novels as it prioritises the rewriting of history with recourse to metafictional technical devices. Postmodernist fiction is 'historiographical metafiction' (Hutcheon, 1988: ix), and articulates the past in order to call attention to the processes of representation that construct histories. It is self-reflexive about the production of histories in order to force a 'rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past' (Hutcheon, 1988: 5). It questions the reliability of conventional conceptions of the past by exposing reality to be a discursive product that is always strategic. 'Textuality is reinscribed into history and into the social and political conditions of the social act itself' (Hutcheon, 1988: 81). This occurs for critical purposes. Historiographic metafiction stresses that the conventional production of history does not bear witness to the perspectives of 'previously "silent" groups defined by differences of race, gender, sexual preferences, ethnicity, native status, [and] class' (Hutcheon, 1988: 61). Therefore, Hutcheon argues that parody is a frequent metafictional

device of historiographical metafiction. A critique is effected by mobilising the conventions of dominant discourses for the purposes of challenging them. Conventions are repeated, but with a critical difference. Parody 'enshrine[s] the past and question[s] it' (Hutcheon, 1988: 126). In that questioning, an attempt is made to move beyond conventional historiography and constitute something new in its wake. The 'Empire Trilogy' is postmodernist insofar as it invites us to question the separation of reality and fiction in order to displace the symbolic resources of Empire from their claim to represent reality faithfully. Yet, its success in achieving this task is ambivalent. Although Farrell's work mounts opposition to the symbolic resources of Empire, it struggles to move beyond the limits of Western historiography.

A reading of Farrell's novels in terms of postcolonialism requires further comment. Farrell was born in Ireland, educated in Fleetwood, Lancashire, and later at Oxford University. After working in both France and Canada, he settled in London during the late 1960s, where he wrote the 'Empire Trilogy'. In 1980 he moved to Ireland, where he died in a freak fishing accident.¹ As Farrell's historical fiction was produced from within the traditional imperial centre, it would seem not to fit Helen Tiffin's mapping of postcolonial literature as moving from 'colonised, formerly colonised, and neo-colonised areas - from African countries, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, India, New Zealand - towards Europe, or more recently towards the United States' (Tiffin, 1991: xi). In her discussion of postcolonial literature, Elleke Boehmer curiously excludes Ireland because 'its history has been so closely and so long linked to that of Britain' (Boehmer, 1995: 4), despite her admission that 'its resistance struggle was in certain other colonies taken as talismanic by nationalist movements' (Boehmer, 1995: 4). There are, I suggest, at least two reasons for reading Farrell's Empire Trilogy in the terms of postcolonial practices. The first reason concerns a recognition of Ireland as a once colonised, now independent nation state that shares certain affinities with non-European decolonised nations. David Lloyd describes Ireland as 'geographically of Western Europe though marginal to it and historically of the decolonising world' (Lloyd, 1993: 2). His approach to Irish culture is built upon a belief that '[f]or the theory and practice of decolonisation [...] Ireland is, to a sometimes

¹ In his book *J.G. Farrell*, Ronald Binns provides a useful and brief biography of Farrell (Binns, 1986: 17-35). Interesting biographical information can also be found in Malcolm Dean, 'A Personal Memoir' (Dean, 1981) and Brigid Allen, 'A Feline Friend' (Allen, 1992).

distressing extent, more exemplary than anomalous' (Lloyd, 1993: 7). Edward Said would agree:

True, the physical, geographical connections are closer between England and Ireland than between England and India, or between France and Algeria or Senegal. But the imperial relationship is there in all cases. Irish people can never be English any more than Cambodians or Algerians or French. (Said, 1993: 275)

The fact that the 'Empire Trilogy' ranges across moments in the histories of Ireland, India and Singapore reveals that Farrell contextualised Irish Independence in terms of a wider struggle against colonial power. The second reason concerns the extent to which Farrell can comfortably be considered a British writer. Ronald Binns records how 'Farrell claimed that in Ireland he was always regarded as English but that in England he was always treated as if he was Irish' (Binns, 1986: 20). Farrell does not have a secure relationship with either the colonising or colonised culture. This perhaps produces a displacement that disrupts Farrell's sense of cultural belonging and complicates his identity as a writer.¹

By representing Farrell's work as intersecting with postcolonial practices, I wish to assess the extent to which it facilitates a mode of historiography that bears witness to those subject to British colonialism. Farrell's novels work from within dominant forms of representation in order to negotiate critique. But it is worth considering if Farrell's novels fully dismantle select modes of representation common to colonial epistemology. My reading of Farrell's work focuses in the main upon its metafictional representation of certain symbolic resources of the British Empire. I consider first the function of parody in *Troubles*, and how this leads to an anxious defence of the historical referent in this text. My reading of *The Siege of Krishnapur* focuses upon the theme of exhibition, and considers the novel as a parodic exhibition of the symbolic resources of Empire. I conclude by exploring Farrell's attempt in *The Singapore Grip* to open a space beyond the limits of conventional models of cultural difference. This space can be understood in the terms of Bhabha's space of possibility that exists at the limits of Western epistemology. However, Farrell's attempt to open this space is

¹ In Jacqueline Genet's book on the Big House novel in Ireland, Fiona MacPhail's essay on *Troubles* is included in a section called 'A View From Outside' (Genet, 1993: vi). Farrell is not considered by this editor to be properly Irish.

not entirely successful and questions the effectiveness of his critical histories.

Troubles: The orderly chaos of history

Troubles can be read as an early attempt to mobilise postmodernist modes of representation to write a critical history of colonialism. The tension this creates is also noticeable in many of the texts I attend to in this thesis. *Troubles* is set in Ireland just prior to the establishment of the Irish Free State and the partition of Ulster that occurred in December 1922. Most of the novel's action takes place in the Majestic Hotel, at the fictional location of Kilnalough. It proceeds from the arrival in July 1919 of Major Brendan Archer to the hotel to meet his fiancée Angela Spencer. The novel is at one level preoccupied with the fortunes of the Spencer family, and the Protestant landed class of which they are a part, during the final days of the British administration of Ireland. The hotel's owner, Edward Spencer, is a member of the Anglophile 'quality' (Farrell, 1970: 34), whose position in Ireland has become tenuous by the time of the novel's setting.¹ *Troubles* depicts the fortunes of the beleaguered 'quality' at a moment of transition in part through metafictional narrative strategies. It plots the declining fortunes of the ruling class from the inside, parodying their symbolic resources. This produces an intriguing dissonance in the novel. On the one hand, colonial power is depicted as waning as the symbolic resources of the Empire begin to fail. This suggests that the symbolic resources of Empire are arbitrary, and that notions of order are primarily the products of representation. Intriguingly, from this emerges an anxiety concerning the arbitrariness of historiography. The result is a novel characterised by its tense negotiations between representing history as chaotic and arbitrary, yet secured within certain ontological limits. My discussion of *Troubles* proceeds from an examination of its metafictional elements in order to examine the formulation of this unresolved tension.

¹ David Cannadine notes that the Irish landed aristocracy based in the South of Ireland experienced a rapid decline in fortunes when it was decided that, from the 1880s, Britain's conflicts in Ireland could be solved through 'the rapid and complete elimination of traditional landlordism and the conversion of former tenants to owner occupiers' (Cannadine, 1990: 472). Lloyd George's attempts between April 1914 and December 1922 to introduce Irish Home Rule made little provisions for the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in the south, and proposals for a second chamber of lords appended to an Irish parliament were not accepted. Cannadine writes that 'neither Lloyd George nor Sinn Fein accepted that essentially self-regarding and obsolete estimate of patrician worth' (Cannadine, 1990: 486). The establishment of an Irish Free State in December 1922 left the Ascendancy isolated. During the following months, the 'quality' were 'brutally swept aside' (Cannadine, 1990: 486).

Let us proceed by examining some of the functions of the novel's most memorable symbol, the Majestic hotel. The narrator's descriptions of the Majestic encapsulate the novel's curious sense of narrative progression. They also parody specific literary conventions. It is significant that the first detailed description of the Majestic depicts it in a ruined state, almost destroyed by fire. The hotel was once a grand and lively dwelling, standing proudly upon a peninsula that was the scene of an annual summer regatta. Within the opening three paragraphs of the novel we glimpse the hotel at various points in the past: as a 'fashionable place' (Farrell, 1970: 9), as a 'charred ruin' (Farrell, 1970: 10) still to be seen, and as an image of its 'former glory' (Farrell, 1970: 10) when Edward Spencer assumes its management. The narrator's speedy depiction of the Majestic's decline pauses only once to linger over its ruins:

At intervals along the outer walls there is testimony to the stupendous heat of the fire: one can disinter small pools of crystal formed in layers like the drips of wax from a candle, which gathered there, of course, from the melting of the windows. Pick them up and they separate in your hand into the cloudy drops that formed them. (Farrell, 1970: 10)

The initial representation of the Majestic has two consequences. First, by lingering over the ruin the narrator accentuates the Majestic in its states of decline. It intimates the distance between its glorious past and what it has become. This lends to the novel a shaping sense of temporal progression from the outset by preparing for the plotting of the steady demise of the Majestic and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in the novel. Walter Benjamin's comments about the symbolic significance of ruins are helpful in clarifying this point. Benjamin argues that the image of the ruin creates a perceptible sense of historical direction: '[i]n the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay' (Benjamin, 1977: 177-178). The shape of the ensuing narrative mirrors the gradual, inevitable demise of the hotel's structure. However, just as significant - and somewhat paradoxical - is the *interruption* of a sense of linear time by the narrator in these opening sentences. It is to be noted that the narrator's account of the fortunes of the Majestic, summarised above, does not obey the passage of linear time. We begin with the depiction of the Majestic at the height of its popularity, we move forward to the present and pause over its ruined state, before moving back in time again in learning of its acquisition by

Edward Spencer. Furthermore, in the opening sentences the narrator's description of the Majestic's former glory is punctuated with vague temporal references. These complicate the identification of a process of 'irresistible decay' that can be plotted unequivocally. Margaret Scanlan argues that the opening line of the novel locates the Majestic in the 'vague time of myth' (Scanlan, 1990: 52). The narrator begins with discussing the splendour of the Majestic '[i]n those days' (Farrell, 1970: 9) and 'at that time' (Farrell, 1970: 9), without specifying exactly when 'that time' occurred. The erosion of the peninsula upon which the Majestic stands suddenly becomes linked to the future, as narrator conjectures that 'one day' (Farrell, 1970: 9) the high tide might meet over its narrowest part. Next, the narrator returns to the past to mention the discontinuation of the regatta 'years ago, before the Spencers took over' (Farrell, 1970: 9). Such indistinct temporal references are continued when the narrator mentions the burning of the Majestic 'a few years later still' (Farrell, 1970: 9). The accumulation of these references makes the passage of time seem less defined and steady, in contrast to the sense of inevitable historical progression conveyed by the image of the ruin. In *Troubles* time is often indistinct. When the Major first arrives at the Majestic, he notices that the clock behind the reception desk is 'showing the wrong time' (Farrell, 1970: 21). Dates are never more specific than the year - 'on this morning of 1920' (Farrell, 1970: 194) - or the month - 'were they relieved and gratified to read, that August, of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act?' (Farrell, 1970: 215). As a consequence, it becomes difficult to pinpoint the precise moment of many of the text's episodes. The temporal ambiguity of *Troubles* is as characteristic as its sense of irresistible decline. The narrative is fissured and episodic, as events proceed in an random fashion. To choose just one example, the occasion of Mr Noonan's visit to the Majestic occurs between two accounts of Sarah Devlin's correspondence with the Major during his sojourn in London. There often appears to be no inevitable link between subsequent episodes. The bulk of the novel's action, then, is refracted through two temporalities: a sense of certainty and inevitability, and an impression of things as ill-defined. These temporalities are important in understanding the anxious historiography of *Troubles*.

The novel's metafictional narrative strategies chiefly concern the Majestic hotel. Through the representation of the Majestic, Farrell deploys two related narrative conventions.

The first is the depiction of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy primarily through the image of the Big House. The second is the portrayal of the decline of the Big House that symbolises the waning fortunes of the Ascendancy in the early 1920s. *Troubles* shares affinities with a particular type of fiction often called the Big House novel.¹ In her discussion of the Big House in Irish literature, Jacqueline Genet argues that it functions as a sign of both Anglo-Irish Protestant landowners and 'English Imperialism' (Genet, 1991: x):

The Big Houses of Ireland contain the myth of Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. They offer an explanation of that class, its style and manners, they set out its relation with its environment and culture, and they plot its eventual disintegration and decomposition. [...] [The Big House] was to become a landmark of English dominion and a projection of English identity. (Genet, 1991: ix)

The Majestic's infernal fate is very much part of the topos of Big House fiction, and bears witness to the fortunes of many Big Houses during the transitional months of Irish independence. It recalls Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, where Danielstown is razed to the ground.² As Richard Gill notes, the burning of the Big House 'was more dramatically linked with revolutionary social change: the home passed away with the Anglo-Irish establishment. During the Troubles, the house was usually burned to the ground and as a charred ruin became a monument to a vanished order' (Gill, 1972: 168). The vanished order of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy is intimated through the image of the Big House in all its splendour when Edward takes the Major on a brief tour of the Majestic. They pause in the ballroom, where Edward describes to the Major the wonderful parties of the past. The passage is marked by a tone of nostalgia in its elegiac remembrance of the Majestic's former glories:

in the old days [Edward explained] it must have been really magnificent: the great Hunt Balls, the carnivals, the regattas (think of the lanterns glimmering on the yachts that bobbed at the landing stage) ... the dancing would go on until the

¹ For a detailed discussion of Big House novels in Anglo-Irish literature, see the essays collected by Jacqueline Genet in *The Big House in Ireland* (Genet, 1993), and Brian Donnelly's essay 'The Big House in the Recent Novel' (Donnelly, 1975).

² Such is the potency and symbolic richness of the image of the burning 'Big House', that doubts have been raised concerning the historical accuracy of their widespread destruction. Mark Bence-Jones argues that, at the most conservative estimate, seventy houses were burned 'at a time when there would have been at least two thousand country houses in Ireland' (Bence-Jones, 1978: xxvii). Bence-Jones believes the number burned to be well below thirty-five. More significant is the 'all-too-frequent sight in Ireland' (Bence-Jones, 1978: xxviii) of the ruined country house, fallen into disrepair. He conjectures that the frequent sight of the ruin in the Irish landscape stimulates the myth that a large proportion of country houses were destroyed by fire. Their burning may be more of a myth than an historical phenomenon.

rising sun dimmed the chandeliers and the waiters carried in silver trays steaming with bacon and kidneys and fried eggs gleaming in the sunlight and silver coffee-pots breathing wisps of steam like ... like old men talking in winter. (Farrell, 1970: 67)

The opulent world of the Anglo-Irish in their heyday is suggested by the glimmering and gleaming light imagery, and the steaming food. The elegiac tone is also accentuated by the curious metaphor of old men talking in winter that perhaps suggests ageing and decline. However, it is clear that the narrator does not mobilise the Big House topos in order to become nostalgic about a diminishing past, such as is displayed here by Edward. He does not write a nostalgic history. Nostalgia is denied by the parodic treatment of Big House in *Troubles*. This serves to displace its generic conventions. The Majestic is not owned by an established Anglo-Irish family, but was bought by Edward 'on his return from India' (Farrell, 1970: 10). Edward is more of a parody of an Anglo-Irishman. His name recalls that of the sixteenth-century poet Edmund Spenser, who spent a great deal of his adult life in Ireland; first, as secretary to the Governor General of Ireland, and later as the Sheriff of Cork. Spenser owned a three thousand acre estate, Kilcolm Castle, on which he intended to settle a community of English immigrants.¹ His thoughts on colonialism in Ireland were expressed in his treatise *A View to the Present State of Ireland*. Like the Majestic, Kilcolm Castle was burned in October 1598 during a rebellion, and Spenser was driven back to England. The Majestic is also parodic. It is not a family home but a hotel, a place of temporary accommodation where a variety of people (such as the Major, the soldiers, and the Oxford undergraduates) come and go. The 'maiden ladies' (Farrell, 1970: 11) in permanent residence at the Majestic 'are not the old-established families of the demesnes that are [conventionally] doomed to be burnt' (MacPhail, 1991: 247). Edward's son and heir, Ripon, is engaged to Maire Noonan, a Catholic. Their marriage would do little to secure the purity of Edward's Protestant lineage or keep the Majestic as the sole property of the Anglophile 'quality'. The Majestic is less a symbol of the predominance of the Ascendancy as it is an ironic indicator of their increasing redundancy. For most of the novel the Majestic is represented as a shadow of its former self, a building that has degenerated into a comic version of a Big House. This is evidenced by the description of the Major's first sight of

¹ Spenser's discourse on Irish colonial administration are summarised by Ciaran Brady in her essay 'The Road to the View: On the Decline of Reform Thought in Tudor Ireland' (Brady, 1989).

the Majestic:

Not far away the two massive, weatherworn gateposts of the Majestic rose out of the impenetrable foliage that lined the sea side of the road. As they passed between them (the gates themselves had vanished, leaving only the skeletons of the enormous iron hinges that had once held them) the Major took a closer look: each one was surmounted by a great stone ball on which a rain-polished stone crown was perched slightly askew, lending the gateposts a drunken ridiculous air, like solemn men in paper hats. (Farrell, 1970: 18)

Like the gateposts, the Majestic stands askew from the conventional Big House and tends to be more ridiculous than grand. Later in the novel, the first letter of the hotel's name falls off the hotel's facade. Fiona MacPhail reads this as a revealing gesture by the narrator: 'the reader waits for the last two letters to fall in a similar way, but the building is destroyed before its name becomes, literally, A JEST' (MacPhail, 1991: 247). *Troubles* may engage with Big House conventions, but only to register its distance from them. As a consequence, these conventions are foregrounded. The reader is conscious of the narrator parodying literary conventions.

The failure of the symbolic resources of the Big House to function smoothly signifies the end of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. Perhaps the most telling example of this failure concerns the ball that Edward holds at the Majestic towards the end of the novel. Edward responds to his declining fortunes by attempting to resurrect images of the past in the present that will recuperate the grandeur and significance of his increasingly threatened social order. The ball is Edward's nostalgic attempt to recreate the spectacle of Anglophile social finery:

Suddenly the thought came to him that he should give a ball - a magnificent ball, the kind of ball they used to give here in the old days ... The pleasure of your company is requested ... the formal delicacy of this phrase enchanted him. (Farrell, 1970: 324)

Edward's enchantment with the formal delicacy of the invitations he will send accentuates the comfort that formal conventions provide for him. The ball is an attempt to keep the social order of the Ascendancy significant and secure. Yet, like the Majestic, the ball can only parody those that took place in the old days, and it serves to accentuate a disjunction between the Majestic's former glories and its current derelict state. On the night of the ball Edward wears a tuxedo of 'a most antique cut' (Farrell, 1970: 325) which reveals 'the years that had elapsed since the tailor has done his work' (Farrell, 1970: 325). Young male members of the 'quality' are noticeably

absent - many having expired in the trenches - and this 'shortage of young men' (Farrell, 1970: 329) is filled with some officers from the Auxiliary troops specially invited for the occasion, whose intemperate behaviour spoils the proceedings. The narrator's description of the ball emphasises the extent to which the guests appear as parodic copies of those people who might have attended such functions before the turn of the century:

If only there had been more people! No doubt it was this absence of youth which lent the guests the appearance of wax figures, museum curiosities, unconnected with the present world, the seething modern era of 1921. (Farrell, 1970: 336)

This is a metafictional moment. The reality of the ball is eclipsed by its significance as a representation of a lost past, akin to museum piece. There is a contrast between Edward's ball and those of former times that he described so eloquently to the Major early in the novel. The Ascendancy can only resurrect itself as a parodic shadow of its former self. The ball eventually breaks down into disorder and chaos. Edward disappears during the evening, and many of the guests leave early. A catering firm arrives the following morning to serve breakfast, but nobody is left. The caterer, Mr O'Flaherty, orders his staff to prepare the food and be ready to wait on any guests, who never arrive. This incident suggests that the ball has become an empty form, more comic than significant. The attempt to recreate an older order has instead foregrounded its vacuity and mortality.

The failure of the symbolic resource of the Big House to stage the authority of the Anglo-Irish 'quality' is an index of their decline. The loss of order is felt by both Edward and the Major when they try to understand the situation that surrounds them in Ireland. In depicting their confusion, the narrator approaches a model of history that emphasises randomness. The production of historical narratives is foregrounded, and extends the metafictional elements of the text at work in its parodic narrative strategies. *Troubles* indicates that any pattern derived from the events of an historical moment is, to an extent, imposed and manufactured. Yet, the novel is unwilling to relinquish all certainty for historical texts, and it does not celebrate history as arbitrary, capable of narration in an infinite number of equally valid ways. Let us proceed by discovering this tension in the novel. Attention is often drawn to the process of manufacturing significance for events. This occurs primarily through the many newspaper extracts that

punctuate the narrative. The newspapers are the novel's chief source of information for historical events, as they bear witness to the political upheavals in Ireland, as well as in other colonised places such as India. The Major finds it increasingly difficult to understand what is happening throughout the Empire. He no longer possesses the symbolic resources that help him understand the world. The breakdown of the symbolic resource of the Big House is part of a wider breakdown of order occurring in other parts of the Empire. In the first part of the novel, the Major witnesses a murder of a retired police officer in a street during a visit to Dublin. Afterwards he is visited with a sense of disorientation: 'It was absurd, he thought [...] that in Ireland an old man consulting his watch should be killed. In wartime innocent old people were killed - but Ireland was a peaceful country' (Farrell, 1970: 101). He does not know how to rationalise the Irish situation. It is revealing that the Major can understand better the Chicago race riots reported in the newspapers, as '[u]nlike the Irish troubles one knew instantly which side everyone was on [...] people were using their skin like uniforms' (Farrell, 1970: 133). The racial division of black against white is for the Major easier to conceptualise because this manichean division is a familiar symbolic resource in colonialist discourse. This sense of disorientation connects with the ill-defined temporal progression of the novel, that bears witness to the Major's and Edward's loss of the ability to understand the world around them. On reading a newspaper account of the murder he witnessed, the Major confronts a conceptualisation of history as potentially arbitrary:

An old man is gunned down in the street and within a couple of days this senseless act is both normal and inevitable. It was as if these newspaper articles were poultices placed on sudden inflammations of violence. In a day or two all the poison had been drawn out of them. They became random events of the year 1919, inevitable, without malice, part of history. [...] A raid on a barracks, the murder of a policeman on a lonely country road, an airship crossing the Atlantic, a speech by a man on a platform, or any other of the random acts, mostly violent, that one reads about every day: this was the history of the time. (Farrell, 1970: 102)

The Major is made aware that narratives make random events seem *as if* they are inevitable. Inevitability is a construct, the illusion of narrative. The depiction of the last days of colonised Ireland is refracted through precisely the view of history that the Major meditates upon in Dublin. The narrator does not link historical incidents together in a structured chain that might

stress an inevitable logic behind their unfolding, but rather fashions a sense of history as proceeding more randomly. Indeed, the few 'historical' events that are referenced during the novel are presented in terms of the unforeseen and tangential consequences they effect. One example concerns the shootings of two Royal Irish Constabulary officers at Soloheadbeg on the 21st of January, 1919 by Dan Breen, an Irish Republican Army leader from Tipperary. Existing histories of Irish independence attach a grand significance to this event. Eoin Neeson proposes that these shootings should be remembered as 'the first in the War of Independence which thus began' (Neeson, 1969: 23). In *Troubles*, the shootings are first mentioned in passing during an argument at the Majestic, between Edward, Dr Ryan and others. One of those present, an anonymous 'gentleman in tweeds' (Farrell, 1970: 56) claims he 'knew personally one of the constables killed at Soloheadbeg quarry' (Farrell, 1970: 56). Later, Ripon tells the Major that Edward's decision to visit a local public house with the Majestic's residents 'to have a drink and show the flag' (Farrell, 1970: 85) was prompted by the 'Soloheadbeg affair [...] indignation and patriotism were running high' (Farrell, 1970: 85). Soloheadbeg is only significant insofar as it affects local behaviour in Kilnalough, linking for a moment a murder in a quarry with a trip to the local public house, that degenerates into a 'farcical business' (Farrell, 1970: 85) with the singing of the British national anthem. No attempt is made to represent it as a crucial moment in the history of Irish independence. The narrator prefers to emphasise the significance of incidents at a local level that perhaps would not be recorded in conventional histories. A structure of cause and effect is certainly in place here, but a sense of the visit to the pub as an *inevitable* outcome of Soloheadbeg is certainly muted. In *Troubles*, historical events are displaced through local incident in order to point up their unexpected, rather than inevitable consequences.

The narrator, then, creates a more random sense of historical progression than is expected in conventional narratives. It suggests the failure of those at the Majestic to find conceptual tools that structure the passage of events. The ability to find a pattern for history is an index of power. Both the Major and Edward are disconcerted in different ways by realising that their sense of order has lost some of its inevitability, and appears more random and baffling. Edward's sense of order is initially steadfast. At the Major's first breakfast at the

Majestic, Edward offers morning prayers where he thanks God for the recently agreed Treaty of Versailles. His prayers are marked by a fierce defence of natural order and a rather anxious denunciation of randomness:

For there is an order in the universe ... there is an order. Everything is ordained for a purpose in this life, from the lowest to the highest, for God's universe is like a pyramid reaching from the most lowly amongst us up to Heaven. Without this purpose, our life here below would be nothing more than a random collection of desperate acts ... I repeat, a random collection of desperate acts. (Farrell, 1970: 44)

Edward's repetition of the final sentence of this quotation betrays his discomfort with the lack of order. In a similar fashion, The Major is uncomfortable with his struggle to account for the seemingly incomprehensible events occurring in Ireland. Margaret Scanlan argues that the novel's characters 'are constantly involved in strategies to put off knowing about' (Scanlan, 1990: 41) the violent events in Ireland. In her view, Farrell 'present[s] a history that [his] characters avoid' (Scanlan, 1990: 41). Although convincing, this argument is not sensitive to the way Farrell highlights the troubling *incapacity* of characters to comprehend the Irish situation. Their symbolic resources are inadequate. The Major seems not to avoid the troubles, but is rather unable to conceptualise his historical moment. The importance of deriving a pattern for events is indicated as the Major grows apathetic to reports of terrorism in the newspapers. The inability to assert a pattern on the chaos of everyday life emerges as a failing:

The Major only glanced at the newspapers these days, tired of trying to make sense of a situation which defied comprehension, a war without battles or trenches. Why should one bother with the details: the raids for arms, the shootings of policemen, the intimidations? What could one learn from the details of chaos? Every now and then, however, he would become aware with a feeling of shock that, for all its lack of pattern, the situation was different, and always a little worse. (Farrell, 1970: 169)

Emerging here are the two temporalities that characterise history in *Troubles*. Events, the Major senses, are getting steadily worse, but their pattern remains ill-defined. This signifies the loss of both the political and the imaginative power of the Anglo-Irish to organise and order events in Ireland.

The Major's disorientation is tempered to a degree by a capacity to endure the flux of the world around him. His life in the trenches has accustomed him to 'an atmosphere of change,

insecurity and decay' (Farrell, 1970: 215). But he is never comfortable with his disorientation. Indeed, the Major is often troubled throughout the novel by the ways the events of the First World War are represented in the present. At breakfast on his first morning at the Majestic, he becomes disconcerted by Edward's memorial to the war dead which holds photographs of fallen soldiers. His thoughts suggest a dissatisfaction with the apparent malleability of discourse about the dead:

There were so many ways in which the vast army of the dead could be drilled, classified, inspected, and made to present their ghostly arms. No end to the institutions, civilian and military, busy drawing up their sombre balance-sheet and recording it in wood, stone or metal. (Farrell, 1970: 46)

In the Major's ambivalent feelings towards a conceptualisation of history as random, we encounter the fascinating dissonance of *Troubles*. The novel is caught between the acceptance of the random movement of history and a disquiet towards the ways random events can be variously narrated. This, I argue, explains the curious narrative temporality of *Troubles* that is both structured yet ill-defined. The representation of history as a random process is a cause of anxiety. An attempt is made to ground history in some form of imminent experience that exists beyond the limits of narrative, thus tempering the extent to which history is regarded as a product of narrative. This is the function of the First World War in the text. The War is quietly but constantly kept before us through the character of the Major, whose name - Brendan Archer - is used only once by the narrator. Let us focus upon the visit of the Oxford undergraduate students to the Majestic, in order to clarify the significance of the war. One student, Captain Roberts, is a veteran. At dinner one evening, one young undergraduate, Danby, challenges Edward's views on events in Ireland. Danby refuses to agree with Edward that the Irish are 'bandits and murderers' (Farrell, 1970: 412), and argues that Edward is 'missing the point' (Farrell, 1970: 407) in his views about Irish nationalism, by ignoring the Irish quest for democracy. Danby goes so far as to suggest gaps in his host's learning, asking Edward if he has 'even read Rousseau's *Le Contrat Social*?' (Farrell, 1970: 408). He blames the violence prevalent in Ireland on the colonial activities of 'us British who have been violently repressing [the Irish] since Cromwell' (Farrell, 1970: 409). Edward responds by leaving the room in a temper. His silent exit underlines the fact that he cannot muster a response to Danby's views.

At one level, the scene suggests how Edward has lost the power to narrate history, and the gradual silencing of his perspective of Ireland. The exchange is a battle of historical interpretations. Significantly, both Danby and Edward use the First World War to make their arguments. Edward condemns Irish Catholics for not participating in the war, and then attacking in Easter 1916 'the very lads who were giving their lives to save them' (Farrell, 1970: 411). Danby points out that 'there were a hundred thousand Catholic Irishmen fighting in the British Army' (Farrell, 1970: 411). Eventually, Edward and Danby ask the Major and Captain Roberts respectively to support their arguments. The Major confirms Edward's view that the uprising of Easter 1916 was perceived as a treachery, as his fellow soldiers felt 'they had been stabbed in the back' (Farrell, 1970: 412). Captain Roberts, prompted by Danby, offers a different view by telling that his regiment felt that the uprising was '[p]erfectly justified ... We all thought so ...' (Farrell, 1970: 412). It is perhaps tempting to read this incident as one that highlights the malleability of history. The war is used to support contrary arguments, and it seems impossible to establish exactly the impact of Easter 1916 on the British soldiers in the trenches. Both alternatives are made available by witnesses. The exchange exemplifies the process that so troubles the Major when looking at the photographs of dead soldiers - the many strategic ways the dead can be made to present their ghostly arms.

However, if this incident foregrounds the endless possibilities of organising historical incidents into strategic, contrary arguments, it also bears witness to an indisputable referent that, crucially, is located beyond the limits of language. This is suggested by the actions of the Major and Captain Roberts during the scene. After Edward storms out of the room, the undergraduates dissolve into fits of laughter. Their laughter is not shared by all the guests sat at dinner:

It was such a healthy, goodnatured laughter that even the old ladies found themselves smiling or chuckling gently. Only Captain Roberts at one table and the Major at the other showed no sign of amusement. They sat on in silence, chin in hand, perhaps, or rubbing their eyes wearily, waiting in patient dejection for the laughter to come to an end. (Farrell, 1970: 413)

Those that experienced the war are isolated from the others who argue over the relative significance of its events. The silence of the Major and Captain Roberts bears witness to their

experience. This is accentuated by the fact the narrator curiously relinquishes his omniscient position in the final sentence of this quotation, conjecturing that both characters 'perhaps' have their chins in their hands or are rubbing their eyes. Representation falters for a moment. The incident highlights the *failure* of language to signify a particular experience that has been witnessed. The contrasting evidence provided by the Major and Captain Roberts is preceded by 'a long, interminable silence' (Farrell, 1970: 412) and a 'seemingly interminable silence' (Farrell, 1970: 412) respectively. The impression is given of each character remembering a painful history, but responding mechanically with the required answer like a ventriloquist's dummy. The interminable silences seem inappropriate to the brief answers each character eventually provides. In this silence there is figured a process of historical remembering that is not made manifest in language. It is as if narrating those experiences would open them up to the endless possibilities of interpretation, symbolised by Edward's disconcerting photographs of the dead soldiers and Edward's and Danby's differing arguments. The Major's experiences of the war are often suggested by his silence. He withdraws from a gathering given by his Aunt on his return from the war to sit alone in the drawing room 'amid the silent, hooded furniture' (Farrell, 1970) in bitter contemplation. Only once, in his relationship with Sarah Devlin, does he unburden himself of his memories of the trenches, 'things which [...] he had scarcely been able to repeat to himself' (Farrell, 1970: 137). But the narrator does not describe exactly what these things are, focusing only upon the cathartic effect it has on the Major, who is left in tears. It seems that making this experience commensurate to language would expose it to the reductive processes of interpretation that structure the random and violent into the normal and inevitable, and no longer bear witness to the singularity of the event.

The experience of the war functions as an undisputed historical referent of *Troubles*, a referent that is definite yet indistinct. Its function is to temper the consequences of the novel's insight into the production of history in narrative by gesturing towards a gap between a referent and its possible signification. It is as if the narrator realises that signification dissolves experience into the play of interpretation, and - to borrow Lyotard's vocabulary from *The Differend* - commits a wrong to those that have undergone experiences that cannot yet be phrased. Its phrasing would deny the singularity of the event the Major and Captain Roberts

have experienced by reducing it in a language that is ill-equipped to account for its specificity. The narrator, then, presents two models of history in *Troubles*. The first calls attention to the role of narrative in fashioning historical structures, and consequently recognises what Louis Montrose calls the 'textuality of history' (Montrose, 1989: 20). By highlighting the structuring of historical events in newspapers into 'inevitable' patterns, the novel reminds us 'that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question' (Montrose, 1989: 20). The symbolic resources of Empire are revealed as crucial to a sense of order. Representation is revealed as a central agent in the production of patterning. But the consequences of this for historiography breed anxiety in the novel, and it pulls back from casting history as primarily the product of language. Thus, the novel constructs a second model of history where a gap is opened between the experience of historical events and their narration. The novel attempts to locate a referent beyond the infinite possibilities of interpretation. These contradictory models of history effect the curious and unresolved tensions that characterise *Troubles*: between linear and non-linear time, between inevitability and randomness, between language and silence. Farrell's attempt to depict the decline of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy with recourse to postmodernism facilitates an anxiety concerning the referentiality of history itself. This anxiety can be discovered in several of the novels I explore in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

The Siege of Krishnapur: Exhibiting Empire

The Siege of Krishnapur depicts the fortunes of a small group of characters living in a cantonment in the town of Krishnapur prior to, and during, the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The community becomes besieged in the Residency at the heart of the cantonment for several months, before help arrives. The siege of the fictional Krishnapur is modelled on the siege of Lucknow that began on the 30th of May, 1857 and continued until the successful evacuation of British civilians on the 18th of November. Lucknow was occupied by Indians from November until its recapture by British forces in February 1858. Yet, the novel does not attempt to construct a faithful representation of Lucknow, although the novel mobilises archival records at

many points.¹ Indeed, its processes of representation are self-consciously foregrounded. Farrell's novel is deliberately parodic of received images of the Indian Mutiny in an attempt to interrupt their symbolic resourcefulness for the maintenance of colonial power. The purpose of this novel, it seems, is to reveal the contradictions within colonial discourses that construct hierarchies of cultural difference.

As in *Troubles*, the narrator of *The Siege of Krishnapur* works within the conventions of existing discourse, primarily through the strategy of parody. Yet, there is a more sophisticated exploration in this novel of relations between the processes of constructing order and the maintenance of positions of power. Rather than lay claim to experiences that are incommensurate to language in order to secure a historical referent, in *The Siege of Krishnapur* colonialist discourse functions as the material historical referent. I am using here Foucault's definition of discourse as a place 'where knowledge and power are joined together' (Foucault, 1972: 100). Foucault's definition of discourse is productive in the present context, as it exposes connections between the ways the world is cognitively seized, and the material effects of power that knowledge sanctions. Foucault argues that discourses are not innocent 'groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but [...] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49). Foucault's delineation of the referent of the statement is analogous to the referent in Farrell's novel:

A statement is not confronted (face to face, as it were) by a correlate - or the absence of a correlate - as a proposition has (or has not) a referent, or as a proper noun designates someone (or no one). A 'referential' that is made up not of 'things', 'facts', 'realities', or 'beings', but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it. (Foucault, 1972: 91)

The referent in *The Siege of Krishnapur* is the multiplicity of colonial discourses that set limits to, and produce, material practices. Such discourses define the laws of possibility for acts of

¹ The novel concludes with an 'Afterword' where Farrell cites the major sources he has consulted in the novel. Indeed, when reading historical accounts of the siege of Lucknow, many antecedents can be found for even the finest details. For example, Hari's passion for daguerreotypes seems based upon that of a Lucknow Muslim who produced daguerreotypes free of charge at the palace in the town. Lucknow's chaplain during the siege, Revd James Parker Harris, seems the model for Farrell's ardent Padre. Even Fleury's dog Chloë has an historical antecedent - Chloë was the name of the dog owned by Revd Polchampton, also a Lucknow Chaplain who died from cholera in July 1857. See Derrick Hughes, *The Mutiny Chaplains* (Hughes, 1991: 124-169).

representation. By mobilising the symbolic resources of colonial discourse, the narrator attempts to bring those discourses to crisis. However, if Farrell's novel enables a space to be opened where the contradictions of colonialist discourse are exposed, it also remains ambivalently constrained within the specific limits of colonial discourse, constraints which *The Siege of Krishnapur* acknowledges but struggles to dislodge. These constraints hamper its attempt to construct a postcolonial critical history. My discussion of the novel will proceed by exploring its interruption of two of colonialism's symbolic resources: representations of the Indian Mutiny, and the Great Exhibition of 1851.

While discussing the production of images of national unity, Homi Bhabha calls attention to the importance of their repeated rehearsal: 'the scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be *repeatedly* turned into signs of a national culture' (Bhabha, 1994: 145). Bhabha's comment implies that, in the context of imagining a people, structures of meaning are fragile. They require constant performance in order to produce signs of national unity from a heterogeneous assortment of cultural products. We might regard colonial texts as agents which repeatedly perform the hierarchies of colonialism, rehearsing and perpetuating an ideology which, for example, posits a divide between different peoples in the production of identities available to colonial subjects. In the context of our discussion of Farrell, representations of the Indian Mutiny have provided one occasion of this necessary performance. In his study *Novels on the Indian Mutiny*, S.D. Singh proposes that the Mutiny provided English novelists with an excellent scenario where both 'British valour and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race over the subjugated nations' (Singh, 1973: 73) could be portrayed.¹ Singh's work charts the wide proliferation of novels which eulogised the British defeat of the sepoys, particularly in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Remarkably similar in structure, such texts depict a young, adventurous hero who - against all the odds - assists in quelling the uprising, and ultimately wins the hand of a beloved. Adventure and romance are two of the genre's most typical features:

The fictionalisation of history demands a romantic situation to go alongside the historical situation of the mutiny [...] The two parallel plots of action are

¹ Singh's reading of Mutiny novels is prefaced by an extremely useful historical account of the Indian 'Mutiny', sensitive to the impact of events on both the British and the Indian communities.

resolved by the hero, who, in most of the cases, gets a V.C., as well as a wife, if not also an estate and a title to lord it over at home in England. (Singh, 1973: 183)

It is important to recognise the role these fictions played in perpetuating British myths of India.

As Jenny Sharpe argues:

our perception of 1857 has been coloured by the years of myth-making that have gone into the popularised revolt. The accounts of white settlers in a state of exhaustion, terror and confusion have since been sealed with the stamp of authenticity that guarantees all eyewitness reports [...] The Bible, Homer, Virgil, Dante and Shakespeare have all provided the Mutiny narratives with their charged plots of martyrdom, heroism, and revenge. (Sharpe, 1993: 227, 228)

The Mutiny novels are part of the symbolic resources of colonial discourse, particularly those discourses about the frontier. David Trotter points to the fact that many colonial novels set at the outposts or frontiers of the Empire represent them as sites of 'self-endangering and self-renewal' (Trotter, 1990: 5) for the colonising subject. The frontier was mythologised as a place where colonising subjects might prove their strength of character and moral worth by defending the values of the West from a perceived hostile, barbarous culture. The colonised subject was heroic, active and brave. Trotter argues that the myth of the colonising hero contributed to the construction of colonial identities; it defined an idealised role to which colonising subjects aspired. The myths of the Mutiny enact that process, idealising the bravery of the British community in India when threatened and perpetuating Orientalist notions of cultural superiority and fortitude.

At first sight it might seem that *The Siege of Krishnapur* is typical of this genre. Historical incident from the Mutiny is presented to display the heroism of the British colonisers. During the ball at Calcutta in Chapter 2, the narrator alludes to the story of General Hearsay. Hearsay was the commander of the 34th Native Infantry in India. On the 29th of March, 1857, he suffered his life to be threatened by a mutinous sepoy during a parade. When faced with the General's anger, the sepoy shot himself.¹ In the novel, this incident becomes mythologised as

¹ The sepoy, Mangal Pande, survived the shot and was tried for mutiny. He was executed on the 8th of April, 1857. His name soon became the British soldiers' general term for all Indian mutineers. (Mutineers captured and hanged by the British were observed by soldiers to dance a 'Pandy hornpipe' as they swung from the gallows.) A helpful account of the Pande incident that occurred at Barrackpore is provided by Christopher Hibbert in *The Great Mutiny* (Hibbert, 1978: 68-72).

an example of the overpowering nature of the General's 'moral presence' (Farrell, 1973: 40) and he comes to signify 'courage personified' (Farrell, 1973: 40) to his admirers. Coupled with heroism is the presence of a romantic element in the text. Newly arrived from England, George Fleury soon develops an attachment to Louise Dunstable, daughter of one of the doctors stationed at Krishnapur. Indeed, the first mention of either character is full of romantic overtones: 'It was during the winter that George Fleury first set eyes upon Louise Dunstable' (Farrell, 1973: 20). Fleury is depicted as a comic, hapless romantic. He 'generally liked sad things, such as autumn, death, ruins and unhappy love affairs' (Farrell, 1973: 26). During the visit to the Botanical Gardens in Chapter 2, he romantically compares the banyan trees to 'a ruined church made by nature' (Farrell, 1973: 29). But the narrator ironises Fleury's romantic leanings, instead of simply utilising the romantic topos. First, the other characters in the text treat his behaviour as somewhat odd. His thoughtful nature seems out of place during the frolics which occur at the Gardens:

Young ladies these days were more interested in the qualities of Tennyson's 'great broad-shouldered, genial Englishman' than they were in pallid poets, as Fleury was dimly beginning to perceive. Louise Dunstable's preference for romping with jolly officers which had dismayed him on the day of the picnic had no means been the first rebuff of this kind. (Farrell, 1973: 36)

Second, Fleury's romantic nature is further ironised by the awkwardness he often feels in pursuit of his beloved. He is conscious at all times that he is being watched and judged by Louise, and seeks to act accordingly. While having dinner with Collector in Chapter 3, typical of his youthful, impetuous manner, he attacks the materialism of the Great Exhibition of 1851 with much ardour. At the end of his passionate denunciation he 'dared not glance at Louise. Somehow he knew she would not be pleased' (Farrell, 1973: 51).

In these early depictions of Fleury, the narrator is calling attention towards identity as a staged category, as a role to be performed. By gently ironising Fleury's manner by noting his self-consciousness, Fleury is presented as someone attempting to aspire to a preconceived type, the romantic. This idea of staging, of playing prescribed roles, is very important in the novel, and is the crux of its parodic displacement of colonial discourse. Characters are often depicted as self-consciously attempting to act out conventional roles. As Nicholas Thomas has described

in detail, a common trait of representations of colonial spaces is the construction of a 'studio'. This is a perceived blank space in which the artist arranges and manipulates elements in the colonies to construct a particular scene that the artist seems to observe passively: 'A studio can be defined theoretically as a frame for representation that permits a photographer or narrator to surround decontextualised bodies with meanings of his choice' (Thomas, 1994: 193-194). In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, the narrator attempts to foreground the production of a studio in colonial discourse by calling attention to those narrative conventions that frame the action of the siege. Thomas's metaphor of the studio is apt in the present context, because it calls attention to the process of staging that is at the heart of the text. The novel is full of occasions when characters seek to act out a predetermined role, to utilise the symbolic resources of colonial discourse in an attempt at self-fashioning. Let us consider the convention of heroism in the light of this argument. As Hugh Ridley argues, 'the possession of colonies is shown to make possible heroic and manly virtues which are their own justification' (Ridley, 1983: 104). Aspirations of heroism motivate many of the characters in *The Siege of Krishnapur*. Soon after his arrival at the cantonment, Fleury witnesses an alarming scene while visiting Mr Rayne's bungalow. Lieutenant Cutter bursts into the bungalow on horseback and attacks an empty sofa as if it were a murderous foe:

The ladies clutched their breasts and did not know whether to shriek with fear or laughter as Cutter, his face as scarlet as his uniform, drove his redundant horse forward into the room and put it at an empty sofa [...]

'Do you surrender, sir?' he bellowed at a cushion on the sofa, his arm drawn back for a thrust.

'Yes, it surrenders!' shrieked Mrs Rayne.

'No, it defies you,' shouted Ford. (Farrell, 1973: 59)

Cutter's simulation of military prowess is a particularly visible example of a process which pervades the text in general. The characters are eager to play prescribed parts. This is certainly the case for Fleury and Harry. Early in the novel, these young, adventurous characters seem delighted at the outbreak of the siege. After rushing back to the safety of the cantonment when the siege begins, they are both anxious to relate an incident concerning a sepoy who might have fired a shot in their direction. Harry in particular is keen to tell of their daring flight as 'he had found that because of his strained wrist he had missed an adventure at Captainganj' (Farrell,

1973: 64). Similarly, both Harry and Fleury valiantly decide to rescue Lucy, the 'fallen woman,' from the *dak* bungalow outside the cantonment as the siege intensifies. This 'was exactly the sort of daring and noble enterprise that appealed to the young men's imaginations' (Farrell, 1973: 104). Even in battle, Fleury delights in envisioning himself in heroic postures. While engaged in firing a cannon, he pictures himself captured in a noble pose. The smoke and haze of battle lends the scene 'a "historical" quality because everything appeared faintly blurred, as in a Crimean daguerreotype. Fleury found himself appending captions to himself for the *Illustrated London News*' (Farrell, 1973: 139). When the Residency is eventually liberated from its months of siege, the narrator calls attention to the mythologising that will consequently occur when he records the thoughts of the liberating General:

Even when allowances were made, the 'heroes of Krishnapur', as he did not doubt they would soon be called, were a pretty rum lot. And he would have to pose for hours, holding a sword and perched on a trestle or wooden horse while some artist-wallah depicted 'The Relief of Krishnapur'! He must remember to insist on being foregrounded, however; then it would not be so bad. With luck this wretched selection of 'heroes' would be given the soft pedal . . . an indistinct crowd of corpses and a few grateful faces, cannons and prancing horses would be best. (Farrell, 1973: 310-311)

The novel's final depiction of the besieged Residency is refracted through the General's imagination, which calls attention to the production of images of valour in representations of the Mutiny. Heroism is primarily a product of staging in the novel, rather than a value that the narrator uncritically supports.

This calling attention to the process of staging is the primary metafictional strategy in *The Siege of Krishnapur*. It is significant to note how often the novel presents its action in theatrical terms, as a staged spectacle watched by an audience. This contributes to the displacement of conventions in the novel, by foregrounding the framework within which the action is being described. The Collector in particular notices that, as the position of the besieged Residency becomes more precarious, 'it had become the custom for a vast crowd of onlookers to assemble on the hill-shore above the melon beds to witness the destruction of the Residency' (Farrell, 1973: 174). Similarly, just prior to the liberation of the Residency, those still alive become subject to a distinctly theatrical gaze:

Some of the wealthier natives brought picnic hampers in the European manner, and their servants would unroll splendid carpets on the green sward; while their banquets were spread out on the carpets they could watch what was going on through telescopes and opera glasses which they had had the foresight to bring with them [...]. (Farrell, 1973: 277)

The references here to telescopes and opera glasses call attention to the fact that the action at the Residency is being refracted through lenses to an audience. Indeed, the Collector is conscious that his daughters keep watch over him in a similar fashion as he tours the cantonment as the siege proceeds, and he imagines how he appears framed by 'the prism of his daughters' telescope' (Farrell, 1973: 171). For the reader, the lenses through which the novel's action is viewed are the conventions of colonial discourse, to which the narrator calls our attention by making the process of staging a theme of the text. We are made aware, as we read, that the novel's action is taking place in a studio. The purpose is to highlight how conventions become aspirations that serve to legitimate colonial power. The extent to which the studio is taken as a faithful depiction of reality is coterminous with the relative security of colonial discourse. Harry's tale of adventure referred to a moment ago is envied by the British soldiers who survive the opening attacks on Krishnapur, as '[t]hey wished they had had an adventure too, instead of their involuntary glimpse of the abattoir' (Farrell, 1973: 95). What is so striking about this quotation is the fact that these soldiers are jealous of Harry and still wish to experience an adventure. Their first taste of battle has done little to make them question the heroic myths to which they aspire. The symbolic resources of Empire themselves are involved in the legitimating of Empire by representing moments of potential suffering as productive occasions where a colonising subject might find the means to aspire to an heroic identity. The novel interrupts the process of constructing images of Imperial rule by highlighting their ideological functions. It represents critically the seductive potential of the symbolic resources of Empire.

It is within the context of disassembling such myths that Farrell's usage of the Great Exhibition can be read as strategic and urgent. The Great Exhibition of 1851 is used by Farrell to explore and problematise the complicity of representation and colonial power. The exhibiting of collected objects in many ways exemplifies the extent to which culture is a process of staging. Collections are discourses. As Robert R. Wilson argues, '[a] collection symbolises all other human activities that attempt to fasten handles upon, to grasp and hold onto the

slippery groundlessness of, 'reality' ' (Wilson, 1988: 98). In his book *Ephemeral Vistas*, Paul Greenhalgh outlines the connections between the perpetuation of colonial order and the form of the exhibition which grew in popularity as the late nineteenth-century proceeded. 'Imperial achievement was celebrated to the full at international exhibitions' (Greenhalgh, 1988: 52). Specifically, '[t]he [Great] exhibition was to simultaneously glorify and domesticate Empire' (Greenhalgh, 1988: 54). In an informative essay concerning the production of social power relations at nineteenth-century exhibitions, Tony Bennett explores the space of the exhibition from a Foucauldian perspective. He argues that the exhibition sent quite specific messages to the populace:

this was the rhetoric of power embodied in the exhibitionary complex - a power made manifest not in its ability to inflict pain but by its ability to organise and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order. (Bennett, 1988: 80)

Bennett explains how exhibitions perpetuated knowledge of the world based upon imperialist principles. Visitors to such occasions as the Great Exhibition were faced with displays of other cultures represented as 'examples of an earlier stage of species development which Western civilisations had long ago surpassed' (Bennett, 1988: 92). Such strategic displaying invited the visitors to consider themselves as a 'unity in opposition to the primitive otherness of conquered peoples' (Bennett, 1988: 92). Initially, Farrell highlights the association between colonial discourse and collecting by the fact that Fleury is writing a book, 'a small volume describing the advances that civilisation had made in India under the company rule' (Farrell, 1973: 28). His visit to the Maharajah's palace in Chapter 5 is specifically 'to collect some exotic items of local colour for his diary' (Farrell, 1973: 68). One of the main characters in *The Siege of Krishnapur* is the Collector, who, as his title implies, is fascinated by the accumulation of objects, and is particularly interested in the Great Exhibition of 1851. Lars Hartveit has recorded the intricate ways Farrell incorporates references from the Great Exhibition's catalogue into his novel, noting that the 'objects in the Collector's collection are often described in almost verbatim excerpts from the [Great Exhibition's] catalogue' (Hartveit, 1993: 461). It might seem that such references secure the referential certainty of the text, implicating the text with an existing archive. However, I want to consider the Exhibition as a *metaphor* for the novel's narrative

strategies. The novel parodies the ways by which material objects and possessions were collected to signify the greatness of British culture. The text is keen to demonstrate, and interrupt, the ways the Exhibition functioned as a significant symbolic resource. In his book *The Great Museum*, Donald Horne argues that the display of collected objects constructs a particular 'rhetoric of monuments' (Horne, 1984: 2). A new value is attached to an object by including it with other objects that are deemed to share a common link. The Great Exhibition formulated a specific, self-legitimizing rhetoric by collecting a variety of phenomena under the heading of imperial greatness. *The Siege of Krishnapur* replicates this common rhetoric of the Exhibition's monuments through the mouth of the Collector, who recalls the collected objects as signifying cultural sophistication when he quotes sections of the catalogue to Fleury:

Every invention, however great, however small, is a humble emulation of the greatest invention of all, the Universe. Let me just quote at random from this catalogue of the Exhibition [...] which I beg you to consider as a collective prayer of all the civilised nations. (Farrell, 1973: 53)

Exhibitions disseminated a view of British cultural superiority which, in Greenhalgh's words, were 'intended to distract, indoctrinate and unify a population' (Greenhalgh, 1988: 49). However, this comment indirectly calls attention to the potential heterogeneity of the objects collected. As Donald Crimp notices, collections are first and foremost places of multiplicity and 'absolute heterogeneity' (Crimp, 1984: 43) where an assortment of diverse objects are endowed with a common set of secondary values. Homi Bhabha's argument that the signs of a national culture are produced through their repeated articulation is sensitive to the anxious and precarious disavowal of difference that all structures of unity must perform. In these terms, the heterogeneity of the collection may lead to the development of contradictions within the unifying rhetoric of monuments that threaten its efficacy. Indeed, Greenhalgh notes such tensions within the 1851 Exhibition:

The coming together of contradictory values at the exhibitions, whereby positive notions of progress were buttressed against organised oppression and exploitation, says much about the *plural morality* in operation throughout European culture at the time. (Greenhalgh, 1988: 79 - emphasis added)

It is precisely these *contradictions* at the heart of unified colonial taxonomies that are exposed

in the novel. As a consequence, the processes by which colonial knowledge is consolidated are interrupted. The repetition of the significance of cultural artefacts is simultaneously activated and thwarted in the text. This is achieved by manipulating the strategy of the exhibition in two ways.

First, the Collector's plundering of the Residency's possessions as the siege proceeds satirises the homogenising logic of the collection. In Chapter 24 we watch the Collector dismantling the collection of fine objects stored in the Residency.¹ A variety of objects are removed outside to strengthen the ramparts that are rapidly dissolving due to relentless rain:

although a good deal of solid matter had soon accumulated on one or the other side of the ramparts and sometimes on both, it had little or no effect. It was like trying to shore up a wall of quicksand. The Collector resorted to even more desperate remedies. He had the banisters ripped off the staircase, for example, but that did no good either. So in the end he took to pointing at the last and most precious of 'the possessions' . . . tiger-skins, bookcases full of elevating and instructional volumes, embroidered samplers, teasetts of bone china, humidors and candlesticks, mounted elephants' feet, and rowing-oars with names of college eights inscribed in gilt paint [...] (Farrell, 1973: 245)

At one level, this scene indicates the arbitrariness of gathering objects under a common heading. The construction of the ramparts mimics the construction of the collection by utilising multiple phenomena towards a common end. Also of note is the ramparts' threatened disintegration that requires the incorporation of more objects into this parodic collection. This, perhaps, registers the precariousness of the collection, the instability which undercuts all collections and threatens to break up unified systems into heterogeneous parts. This leads to the second of the narrator's strategies, one that plays upon the heterogeneity of collections. At many points in the text, the characters seize prized objects and put them to multifarious uses. The functions of many objects at the Residency become transformed. Things once prized for their aesthetic beauty become ammunition for cannon as the siege continues. This is the fate of two electro-metal figures of Keats and Shakespeare that become 'effective missiles' (Farrell,

¹ This scene is not as improbable as might be assumed. L.E.R. Rees records a similar occurrence in his *Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow*: 'The splendid library of Captain Hayes, consisting of priceless Oriental manuscripts, and the standard literary and scientific works of every language spoken on earth, from the patois of Bretagne down to Cingalese, Malay, and ancient Egyptian, were for the nonce converted into barricades. Mahogany tables, valuable pieces of furniture, carriages, and carts, were everywhere within our entrenchments taken possession of for the same purpose. The records of the offices, in large boxes, chests of stationery, and whatever else we could lay hold of, were made use of to serve as a cover from the enemy's fire, which now constantly increased' (Rees, 1858: 12).

1973: 304). Expensive tables and chairs are added to the ramparts to strengthen the Residency's defences. A billiard table provides a suit of clothes for Fleury, that he receives as a birthday present. Bibles are used to scrape cockchafers from Lucy Hughes's body, much to the consternation of the Padre.

By parodying the way the collection always pulls in two directions - towards homogeneity *and* heterogeneity - the duplicitous function of the Collector's collection is foregrounded. At one level, the British possessions function within colonial taxonomies as signposts of perceived cultural progress. The Collector's comments on the Great Exhibition are voiced from this perspective. Yet, the collection also exists to block that traversal, to keep the colonised at arm's length, distinct from Western innovation. If the collection is an attempt to unify people by constructing notions of universal order, it also seeks to hinder this process by stabilising and hierarchising cultural difference. Even before the outbreak of hostilities, the text registers this doubleness in one of the first descriptions of the Collector's prized objects:

[The Collector's] eyes roamed with satisfaction over the walls, thickly *armoured* with paintings in oil and water-colour, with mirrors and glass cases containing stuffed birds and other wonders, over chairs and sofas upholstered in plum cretonne [...]. (Farrell, 1973: 16 - emphasis added).

The use of the term 'armoured' is revealing in this context. It presents the collection as a source of cultural protection and power, rather than evidence of a beneficial, welcoming culture. The narrator exposes this ambivalence by literalising the metaphorical implications of this opening description as the siege worsens. The collection mutates into a bizarre and chilling armoury. The electro-metal figure of Shakespeare's head 'scythe[s] its way through a whole astonished platoon of sepoy's' (Farrell, 1973: 304). The Collector's prized statue *The Spirit of Science Conquers Ignorance and Prejudice* becomes an agent of destruction rather than a signifier of beneficial progress:

A sepoy with a green turban had had his spine shattered by the Spirit of Science; others had been struck down by tea-spoons, by fish knives, by marbles; an unfortunate *subadar* had been plucked from this world by the silver sugar-tongs embedded in his brain. (Farrell, 1973: 289)

Chris Ferns has argued that the 'displacement of things from their familiar context, an almost

surrealist insistence on the defamiliarisation of the everyday, is one of the basic devices of Farrell's representation of the past' (Ferns, 1987: 280). Although Ferns shrewdly notices the ways Farrell transforms the signifying capacity of the collection, his argument does not go far enough. Farrell seems less interested in defamiliarising than uncovering, in Greenhalgh's phrase, the 'plural morality' of colonialism which the symbolic resources of Empire seek to efface. Thus, the contradictory function assigned to the possessions - as both signifiers of cultural greatness and part of its weaponry - is paradigmatic of the contradictions inherent in colonialism. A metaphorical utilisation of the double function of the exhibition enables the novel to stage the contradictions of British colonialism. By foregrounding the conventions of a specific colonial discourse, a space is opened where those conventions are interrogated. To entertain the notion that in the novel Farrell simply transfers an object from one context to another is to ignore the contradictions *within the initial context*.

The Siege of Krishnapur stands as an ironic collection and exhibition of the symbolic resources of colonial discourse. The unities constructed by colonial discourse are threatened by contradictions the narrator seizes for the purposes of critique. Rather than stand as a realist account of an historical event, the novel utilises parodic, metafictional strategies that foreground the importance of representation in fashioning conventions of 'reality' for colonising subjects. However, Farrell's attempt to expose and criticise the ideological functioning of colonial discourse is not without its problems. Although Farrell may be alert to the role of representation and display in forging the identity of the *colonising* subject, attending to ideas of romance and heroism, there is little attention in the text to the native Indians. The space for critique cleared in the novel is of limited use. J.M. Rignall has accused Farrell of 'making little attempt to enter imaginatively into the native culture of India' (Rignall, 1991: 24). An example of such inadequacy might be the disagreement between the Magistrate and the native landowners in Chapter 6. The landowner's land floods yearly, destroying both cattle and crops. The Magistrate believes that by reinforcing the embankments, more flooding would be avoided. The natives are less enthusiastic about this notion:

Why go to so much trouble when the river could be persuaded not to flood by the sacrifice of a black goat on its banks, the landowners had wanted to know.

'But that doesn't work [argued the Magistrate]. You've tried it before.

Every year the floods are worse.'

The landowners *remained silent* out of polite amazement that anybody could be so stupid as to doubt the efficacy of a sacrifice when properly performed by the Brahmin. (Farrell, 1973: 86 - emphasis added)

Despite Farrell's attempt to articulate a belief-system seemingly at odds with that of the British, it is the *silence* of the Indians that some critics find so worrying. For Margaret Drabble, the sepoys act 'merely as cannon-fodder [...] their cause is given only the most frivolous explanation' (Drabble, 1981: 190). Farrell's narrator remains confined within the limits of colonialist discourses. He does not possess the mobility to bear witness to other cultures. The limitations of *The Siege of Krishnapur* are exposed perhaps by the Indians' silence. However, to attempt to articulate an 'Indian perspective' - whatever that might mean - could replicate an imperialist gesture by seeking to speak on behalf of a culture whose specificity the writer cannot read. In his *Indian Diary*, Farrell noted the limits of his view of India:

I wish my eyes were better able to see the differences between [Indians]. I see things without understanding them. It took me ages to realise that what appeared to be splashes of blood all over the pavements was merely people spitting beteljuice. (Farrell, 1981: 211)

In Farrell's fiction, the narrative perspective stays mostly within the limits of Western epistemology. Attempts to traverse cultural difference are problematic. This evidenced by the representation of Hari. Hari has received an English education, and speaks a curious form of pidgin English characterised by his constant misquoting of Shakespeare's plays.¹ With the Prime Minister, Hari becomes imprisoned in the Residency as the siege worsens. When they are released, the Collector watches them leave the scene of the siege:

A little later from his bedroom, where he had retired for a rest, he watched through his daughters' brass telescope as the grey shadow of what once had been the sleek and lively Hari moved slowly over to the sepoy lines with, as usual, the Prime Minister dodging along behind him. (Farrell, 1973: 211)

This is the last time these characters appear in the novel. They escape the limits of the novel's field of vision. We are not told where they go after their final exit. Unlike the Collector,

¹ This is indicated by Hari's response to the news that he is to be freed from the besieged Residency: 'Mr Hopkin, it is rude to torture me with words. You do better to hang me from mango tree without more ado about nothing' (Farrell, 1973: 210).

Fleury, Harry, Louise Dunstable, Lucy Hughes, Miriam and Dr McNab, Hari and the Prime Minister are not accounted for in the novel's final chapter. They are not part of the novel's resolution. There is no space opened in *The Siege of Krishnapur* where the perspectives of Hari and the Prime Minister might be articulated.¹

Furthermore, the novel's dependence upon the symbolic resources of colonial discourse for parodic purposes perhaps unwittingly perpetuates them in an uncritical fashion. While acknowledging how Farrell makes 'ironic use of the limitations of the [...] adventure story' (Rignall, 1991: 24), J.M. Rignall argues that 'the [novel's] emphasis on 'show' and 'spectacle' *should* alert us to the limitations of Farrell's own adventure-story treatment of battle as entertainment' (Rignall, 1991: 25 - emphasis added). Yet, Rignall's use of the word 'should' perhaps hints at the possibility of another way of reading *The Siege of Krishnapur* which misses such irony and instead participates in precisely that which the novel seeks to problematise. Ronald Binns has proposed that the novel's emphasis on the bizarre and comic may disperse the 'underlying seriousness of Farrell's critique of Empire' (Binns, 1985: 79). The comic momentum generated by a satiric treatment of the Mutiny may carry the reader past a more ironic perspective. The existence of this reading of the text would seem to question Linda Hutcheon's defence of the critical potential of historiographical metafiction, particularly the extent to which parody always involves 'repetition with critical distance' (Hutcheon, 1988: 26). The example of *The Siege of Krishnapur* urges a consideration of the extent to which repetition might recuperate the conventions of dominant discourses rather than effect their critique. The assumption that parody installs irony and critical distance seems less certain than Hutcheon believes.

The novel, then, effects a limited critical history. The narrator works from within the limits of colonial epistemology, subverting its conventions through parody. But the silence of the Indians remains problematic. The novel can be read as a strategic intervention within the structures of colonial discourse, thwarting the perpetuation of the symbolic resources of Empire by questioning the contradictions that they seek to efface. *The Siege of Krishnapur* is an

¹ In an otherwise favourable account of the novel, Frances B. Singh has also criticised Farrell for his delineation of Hari and the Prime Minister. Singh feels that Farrell does not handle these characters with the same sensitivity as he does the Collector and others. The lack of stature for these figures is, for Singh, the novel's 'great tragedy' (F.B. Singh, 1979: 37).

example of what Dennis Porter calls 'counter-hegemonic thought' (Porter, 1983: 181), a perspective critical of colonialism voiced from within the site of colonial epistemology. In its exploration of the ways representation fashions material practices, it avoids the incommensurable split between interpretation and the referent that characterises *Troubles* and offers a more sophisticated critique of the materiality of discourse. Yet, by dismantling colonial discourse from the inside, it is in danger of effecting a process of silencing that disqualifies the possibility of representing the Mutiny from an Indian perspective. We shall meet in the next chapter a similar anxiety in Timothy Mo's *An Insular Possession*. Ultimately, *The Siege of Krishnapur* stands as an ambivalent example both of the ways that, and the extent to which, a writer operating within hegemonic structures of power can interrupt the dynamics of colonial discourse. Like *Troubles*, it cannot resolve a tension it necessarily creates.

***The Singapore Grip*: postcolonial carnivalesque**

The exploration of the relationship between representation and power in *The Siege of Krishnapur* revealed a specific focus upon the material effects of representation more pronounced than in *Troubles*. It is often noted by critics that as the 'Empire Trilogy' proceeded Farrell became increasingly interested in and critical of material wealth. In his interview with Malcolm Dean conducted just prior to the publication of *The Singapore Grip* in 1978, Farrell asserted 'I do have a feeling that as human beings property, materialism, is our undoing' (Deane, 1978: 10). In his memoir of Farrell, Deane notes that Farrell supplemented his research into the history of colonised Singapore with 'original Marx and Engels texts' (Deane, 1981: 199). It is tempting to read *The Singapore Grip* as the most damning of Farrell's works about British imperialism. The novel depicts Singapore just prior to its invasion by Japan in February 1942, and focuses upon the fate of Singapore's business community through the family of Walter Blackett. The text in particular accentuates the relations between colonial power and trade. Two empires are charted in decline; the British Empire, and the business empire of Blackett & Webb owned by Walter Blackett. My reading of this novel attends to the ways it contests the dominance of each through the travesties made of their related symbolic resources. I attend to two occasions where this occurs: the jubilee procession planned by Walter Blackett to celebrate

the fiftieth anniversary of Blckett & Webb, and Matthew Webb's encounters at The Great World fair. Consequently, I argue that this novel best reveals Farrell's ambivalent position in relation to postcolonial practices.

The critical efficacy of *The Singapore Grip* is best grasped with recourse to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. The productiveness of Bakhtin's work for reading Farrell's historical fiction has been previously argued by Lars Hartveit in his criticism of *Troubles*. Hartveit argues that '[t]he world we meet in *Troubles* corresponds closely to the description Bakhtin gives of the carnivalesque, although the vitality we - and Bakhtin - see as carnival's prime mover appears to be at a very low ebb' (Hartveit, 1992: 445). In his view, the action of *Troubles* is framed by two conflicting moods: the order of the past, and the vitality the present. 'Between these antithetic poles the kaleidoscope of living is played out - the carnival which finds room for laughter as well as tears, for the trivial as well as the extraordinary' (Hartveit, 1992: 456). Hartveit neglects to argue why a Bakhtinian reading of *Troubles* is warranted, nor does he specify the strategic effects that could result from the narrator's alleged mobilisation of the 'carnivalesque impulse' (Hartveit, 1992: 444). I believe that the application of Bakhtin's thought seems more appropriate to *The Singapore Grip*, for two reasons. First, the novel invites a Bakhtinian approach due to the language used to depict Walter Blckett's business. Particularly, the travesties made of the Walter's intended procession can be approached through Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque. Second, the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism seems appropriate in understanding the critical history created in the novel. The relevance of dialogism to history has been emphasised by Dominick LaCapra. LaCapra's work engages directly with the dilemma that preoccupies the novelists under study - how to establish a historiography that avoids 'simply converting all history into metahistory or denying the role of referential uses of language in the past and in the historian's account of it' (LaCapra, 1985: 21). One solution he entertains concerns the construction of a dialogic history, one that would take into account the extent to which history is inevitably encountered through representations, at the primary level of the document, or through the existing works of historians. A dialogic history would refuse the 'monological idea of a unified authorial voice providing an ideally exhaustive and definitive (total) account of a fully mastered object of knowledge' (LaCapra,

1985: 36) It would foreground the extent to which historical understanding is always strategically produced for present purposes. LaCapra argues that a dialogic history must bear witness to the consequences of 'larger social, political, economic, and cultural context that places severe restrictions upon it' (LaCapra, 1985: 43). It necessarily 'involves the historian in argument and even polemic - both with others and within the self - over approaches to understanding that are bound up with institutional and political issues' (LaCapra: 1985: 36). The model of history we find in *The Singapore Grip*, I argue, can be described as a dialogue held with the past for present purposes. The novel's fierce appraisal of Singapore's business community in the early twentieth century is only one part of the novel's critical thrust. In its representation of Singapore at a unique moment, suspended between the waning British colonial rule and the Japanese invasion, Farrell discovers a liminal space where colonial epistemology momentarily breaks down. That space becomes a site of possibility, I argue, for future current practices, and is preserved in the novel for these purposes. As I demonstrate, it can be understood in terms of Bhabha's space of possibility at the limits of Western epistemology I explored in the introduction. The novel does not aim to articulate authentic knowledge of the fall of colonised Singapore, but enters into a critical dialogue with elements from this past in order to discover strategies coterminous with postcolonial practices in the present.

As Ronald Binns reminds us, *The Singapore Grip* 'explores the vocabulary and practices of capitalism' (Binns, 1986: 95), highlighting a proximity in the novel between economics and representation. The specificity of this vocabulary is important. It can be discovered in the presentation of Walter Blackett and his company Blackett and Webb, a vast concern based in Singapore which deals chiefly in the production and exporting of rubber. Dupigny, the Frenchman, describes to Matthew Webb (the son of Walter's business partner) the dinners held by Walter for his fellow entrepreneurs as redolent of the age of European feudal power:

But sometimes, when Walter invites his fellow merchants of Singapore the cook makes *un petit effort*. Then, ah! you would think you are in Italy of the Renaissance seated at a table surrounded by merchant-princes. You see, here in Singapore there are many people of this kind. The names of their commercial empires have the ring of glorious city-states, don't you think so? Sime-Darby! Harrisons & Crosfield! Maclaine Watson and Company! Langfield and Bowser! Guthrie & Company! And the greatest of them all, brooding over the

Far East like the house of Medici over Tuscany: Jardine Matheson! [...] at the end of the table, a merchant-prince in his own right, Walter Blackett presides over this reunion of wealth and power if he were Pope Leo X in person! (Farrell, 1978: 136-137).

This congruity between the past feasts of feudal lords and the present dinners of the business moguls is not contingent. The association between the world of business and the reign of feudal barons repeats nineteenth-century attitudes to the regulation of business, such as those expressed by Thomas Carlyle in the fourth book of *Past and Present*. Writing in 1843 about the present condition of Victorian England, Carlyle laments that the world of trade has threatened the forging of significant human bonds and decreased a sense of responsibility between individuals. Britain is sunk into chaos and amorality because '[w]e have profoundly forgotten everywhere that Cash payment is not the sole relation of human beings' (Carlyle, 1897: 146). But to condemn trade is to hinder the great colonising mission itself. 'All men trade with all men' (Carlyle, 1897: 267), he writes, 'and are bound to do it by the Maker of men. Our friends of China, who guiltily refused to trade, in these circumstances, --had we not to argue with them, in cannon-shot at last, and convince them to trade!' (Carlyle, 1897: 267). To resist trade with Britain is to invite a justified military attack, as the Chinese have discovered in the first Opium War. In order to make business responsible for significant human bonding, Carlyle argues that the machinations of business be brought within the traditional hierarchy of aristocracy. Those who own the means of production have a moral duty to nurture a more decent society:

The Leaders of Industry, if Industry is ever to be led, are virtually the Captains of the World! if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an Aristocracy more. [...] Captains of Industry are the true Fighters, henceforth recognisable as the only true ones: Fighters against Chaos, Necessity and the Devils and Jotuns; (Carlyle, 1897: 271-272)

The captains of industry can stop the creation of moral chaos by acting towards their workers in the same way 'The Feudal Baron' (Carlyle, 1897: 274) treated his subjects. A feudal baron earned the love and loyalty of his subjects and always acted in their interests, securing ties with them deeper 'than those of temporary day's wages' (Carlyle, 1897: 274). The baron would watch the lives of his minions with 'rigour yet with love' (Carlyle, 1897: 274). Carlyle urges a similar ethic to pervade the market-place, a 'Chivalry of Labour' (Carlyle, 1897: 277) which

makes the Captains of Industry and the workers responsible to each other.

The connections Carlyle makes between commerce and feudalism are dramatised in *The Singapore Grip*. The 'chivalry of labour' Carlyle proposes is literalised by the activities of Walter and his daughter Joan Blackett, although their actions do little to secure the reciprocal relationships advocated by Carlyle. In a fashion which recalls the marrying of siblings to maintain political power typical of feudalist dynasties, Walter views his eldest daughter, Joan, primarily as a vehicle for continuing his business's ascendancy in Singapore. Twice Walter seeks to marry Joan to a suitable companion in order to consolidate the future of Blackett and Webb; first, with Matthew Webb, son of his deceased partner, and second, with the son of his greatest rival, Solomon Langfield. For much of the novel, Joan accords with the wishes of her father and pursues Matthew. She understands fully the need to 'marry Matthew for the sake of the firm' (Farrell, 1978: 99), although there is the hint that Joan has no choice but to accede to her father's philosophy if she wishes to play a significant role in the family business. For Walter, 'sons are an asset, daughters a liability' (Farrell, 1978: 51), and he is intensely jealous of a rival business family, the Firestones, for producing four sons. Walter fantasises about '[w]hat might have been achieved if Joan had appealed to one of the young Firestones?' (Farrell, 1978: 51). Joan's utility value resides only in her potential to make a suitable marriage. Furthermore, there seems to be an odd contiguity between Joan's behaviour with prospective partners, and the courtly notion that budding bridegrooms must complete an arduous task in order to claim a lady's hand. In Chapter 26, Matthew returns to the Mayfair after spending an evening with Joan, his friend Ehrendorf, and Walter's son, Monty Blackett. His rest is interrupted by Joan and Ehrendorf. Matthew notices that Ehrendorf's clothes are 'sopping wet' (Farrell, 1978: 198), and that 'a pool of water had collected round his shoes' (Farrell, 1978: 200). A possible explanation for Ehrendorf's wetness is provided some moments later, when Joan leads Matthew to the Mayfair's swimming pool, and at last forces an anxious admission of love from the feverish Matthew:

He attempted to put his arm round her but immediately she drew away, saying that there was something he must do first. She told him but he did not understand what it was.

'What?'

'Yes, you must jump into the water with your clothes on.'

'I must do what?' cried Matthew in astonishment. 'Are you joking?'

'No, you must jump in with your clothes on.' (Farrell, 1978: 202)

Matthew refuses. This, I suggest, is a parodic test of love on the part of Joan, a test that Ehrendorf previously seemed quite willing to fulfil. Later, Walter's realisation that the situation in Singapore is becoming increasingly precarious makes him more anxious to marry Joan to Matthew, as 'the many uncertainties which faced international commerce over the next few months and years required that a business should have the strongest foundations' (Farrell, 1978: 244). As Matthew lies recovering from an illness contracted just after his arrival in Singapore, he is visited by Walter and Joan at the Major's residency. Joan disrobes and climbs into bed with Matthew. Walter's thoughts at this point demonstrate the extent to which his chivalry of labour tries to align morality and commerce:

while Joan hung her dress on a coat-hanger to dry before climbing into bed Walter beamed at Matthew more expansively than ever. 'Well, there you are, my boy,' he seemed to be thinking. 'There are the goods. You won't find better. You can see for yourself. It's a good offer. Take it or leave it.' (Farrell, 1978: 262)

Certain associations attach themselves to Walter's use of the term 'goods'. Joan is presented as a commodity, as merchandise fit for the son of a powerful merchant. But in the phrase 'a good offer' there is a sense of moral worth as well as market value in a possible marriage. The term approximates the commodity - a 'good' - with Carlyle's sense of moral good for which captains of industry should be responsible. Matthew will do a good thing, stabilising the fortunes of Blackett & Webb, by marrying a Blackett and thus joining the remaining Webbs and Blacketts by, in Carlyle's words, 'deeper ties' (Carlyle, 1897: 274).

In the light of the chivalry of labour to which Walter adheres, and Dupigny's description of British colonial businesses, I think it appropriate to read the planned procession to celebrate fifty years of Blackett and Webb in terms of feudalism. Walter's procession is perhaps congruous with those of previous, Western feudalistic societies. As Michael Bristol explains, processions were a common feature of the carnivals and festivals during the late Medieval period held to celebrate holidays. Bristol argues that such festivals encouraged 'symbolic disorderly conduct' (Bristol, 1985: 40), and offered the 'occasion for masquerade, disguise and procession' (Bristol, 1985: 40). In *The Singapore Grip* the procession stages the workings of

colonial power, and functions as a symbolic resource of Empire. As Walter argues to the Major, his parade 'deals in symbols' (Farrell, 1978: 43). The procession is to be 'a living diagram, as it were, of the Colony's economy in miniature' (Farrell, 1978: 249). The procession will consist of a series of floats, with allegorical names, that dramatise a particular aspect of Britain's economic and colonial power. One float consists of a huge octopus 'selected to symbolize Singapore herself' (Farrell, 1978: 357), whose tentacles are wrapped around young women with banners proclaiming themselves to be 'Shanghai, Hong Kong, Batavia, Saigon and so forth' (Farrell, 1978: 357). The float stages Singapore's perceived control and supremacy over neighbouring territories. In a way that recalls the novel's feudal, chivalric context, one float features 'a sort of Chinese Saint George' (Farrell, 1978: 361) slaying a giant hook-worm. This float signifies the might of the British in bringing its colonies to servitude. One of Walter's dynamic young executives has thought of a way of dramatising 'some of the hazards which these commercial ventures had to overcome, and still were having to overcome' (Farrell, 1978: 249). As 'the idea of the parade was partly to instruct' (Farrell, 1978: 249), a 'counter-parade' (Farrell, 1978: 249) is conceived. The counter-parade features a series of people dressed as imps and devils who will cause mayhem by throwing banana skins before the allegorical figures of Continuity and Prosperity, the benefits Walter believes his business has brought to Singapore:

there would be imps and devils representing: 'Labour Unrest', 'Rice Hoarding', 'Japanese Aggression', 'Wage Demands' [...] and many more: indeed, there were so many possibilities that they must be careful not to bury the floats completely [...] (Farrell, 1978: 250-251)

This corresponds to the symbolic disorderly conduct about which Bristol writes. The procession dramatises the mutual support of capitalism and colonialism in all its specificity, by recognising the resistance of those subject to its dominance. Rather than exemplify a monolithic version of power, the planned procession recognises contrary elements against which colonial capital must fight to remain in authority. It sanctions the representation of opposition in order to display the continual success of the Singapore business community in defeating agents of disorder. In these terms, the procession stages dissent for the purposes of containment. It constructs symbolic resources that assist in legitimating the propriety of

Walter's, and Singapore's, colonial business community. The counter-parade is one form of counter-discourse, sanctioned by the procession in order to place colonial power on display.

But there is another counter-discourse articulated in the planned procession that is not sanctioned, and works against containment. This is found in the unintended effects of signification generated by the planned procession that ironise the 'friendly grip' (Farrell, 1978: 252) of Singapore's economic power. Within the rich symbolic associations of the procession a site of resistance is generated at a symbolic level. To help us discover this counter-discourse, let us consider Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque. In his book *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin explores the significance of disorderly conduct during late medieval and Renaissance festivals. It would be beyond the scope of my discussion to trace fully the complexity of Bakhtin's argument. But a working definition of Bakhtin's thought is required. Robert Stam helpfully summarises Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque. For Bakhtin, the activities of festival produced a vital, popular force that 'went against the grain of the official [...] feudal culture' (Stam, 1989: 86). Specifically, the carnivalesque delights in travestyng the symbolic resources of the dominant order, creating

an alternative cosmovision dramatised by the ludic undermining of all norms. The carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from the conventional rules and restrictions [...] The principle of the material body - hunger, thirst, defecation, copulation - becomes a positively corrosive force. (Stam, 1989: 86)

The carnivalesque focuses upon bodily functions, lowering 'all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract' (Bakhtin, 1984: 20) to the sphere of 'earth and body' (Bakhtin, 1984: 20). Crucial to the carnivalesque are the images of bodily excrescence that prompt a negation and degradation of the dominant discourse. A liberating laughter is the end product of this process. In *The Singapore Grip*, Walter's planned procession makes possible the carnivalesque refutation of the very thing it seeks to promote. Significantly, this can be identified by attending to images in the procession that suggest bodily functions. Walter is incensed to discover that his son, Monty, travesties one of the floats, which features an abundant cornucopia filled with an array of rubber based products:

To this magnificent array Monty, as a joke, had attempted to add a packet of

contraceptives. As ill luck would have it, Walter had noticed his son chuckling gleefully as he arranged something conspicuously on the very lip of the cornucopia. His display of anger, even to Monty who was accustomed to it, had been frightening. (Farrell, 1978: 355)

The contraceptives imply copulation and physical contact. The lofty symbolism of the cornucopia seems deflated by the inclusion of products primarily concerning sexual intercourse. The intended, abstract symbol of the cornucopia is made earthly through the inclusion of the contraceptives. A second example emerges when the Major is shown by a young executive a float featuring a symbolic rubber tree which pours liquid gold into a basin. The liquid gold is intended to signify wealth and prosperity that results as a consequence of Singapore's industries. The Major's discomfort with the sight suggests that the tree appears, in a bizarre manner, to be urinating:

'It looks as if it's ... well ...' said the Major.

'Yes, I'm afraid it does rather. But it was the best we could do. At first we tried a little conveyor belt inside the trunk which kept spilling coins through the opening in the bark and that looked fine, but the blighters kept pinching the coins.' (Farrell, 1978: 361)

There are two ironies here. First, the fact that children steal from an apparatus meant to symbolise prosperity exemplifies Farrell's characteristic turning of the symbols of Empire against themselves for critical purposes. Second, the urinating tree is a travesty of the lofty symbolism of Empire, as it recasts a symbol of wealth as an image of the body's waste products.

Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque also helps us read The Great World fair, a location with particular significance in Farrell's imaginary Singapore. The Great World also seems to sanction the emergence of the carnivalesque principle. Matthew Webb's first encounter with it occurs between Chapters 21 and 24, and his wanderings through its many activities and sights highlights the dynamic, sensuous character of The Great World. It is represented as a bustling market place, a site of sensual abundance and appetite, a place of leisure and recreation. As Monty explains to Matthew as they stand before its entrance, '[e]verything goes on here' (Farrell, 1978: 160). It is significantly a place of bodily satisfaction. In the passage that describes Matthew's first chaotic steps through its thick crowds, the narrator attends particularly to food, smell, copulation, bodily destruction and physical desire in a series of vivid images:

Here a groaning lady was being sawn in half, there another was being put through a mincer with blood horribly gushing out underneath; next came a shooting gallery where an Australian sergeant in his wide-brimmed hat was using an air-rifle to smash blackened light-bulbs to the jeers of his comrades, and a strip-tease stall; a mahogany stall displayed a sign warning of Waning Virility; 'please swallow our Sunlight Pill for Male Persons, Moonlight Pill for Female Persons. Guaranteed.' (Farrell, 1978: 161-162)

Matthew is bewildered and disorientated by such an assault on his senses. He is captivated by 'various wonders which sprang up one after the another' (Farrell, 1978: 162). Symbols of Empire do not function in *The Great World*. This is suggested by the comic incident when Matthew watches a side-show featuring an human cannon-ball. Miss Kennedy-Walsh, BA (Pass Arts), H Dip Ed, TCD is to be fired from a cannon at a model of an armoured car featuring the head of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito. The display is another attempt to portray symbolically the Empire's superiority to the increasingly influential Japanese. The display is a spectacular failure, as the cannon fails to fire first time, and Miss Kennedy-Walsh then misses the car. A further travesty of the lofty symbols of Empire occurs when Matthew, Monty and their friends have dinner at the fair. Monty is depicted chopping up his fish 'first laterally into quarters, then diagonally, as for the Union Jack' (Farrell, 1978: 177). This is a carnivalesque moment, in that an image of the colonial power becomes refracted through the act of eating, and as such it gives the reader an index as to the symbolic space of *The Great World*.

At the heart of this space of sensuality and heterogeneity Matthew approaches a momentary vision of a new nation somehow conjured from the vitality he has experienced around him:

Would this nation of transients who had come to seek a livelihood under the British crown one day become a nation with a culture of its own, created somehow out of its own diversity? It had happened in America, certainly, but would it happen here where the divergences of culture were even greater than they had been among American immigrants? (Farrell, 1978: 163)

The Great World opens a space within which is figured the possibility of new social formation. This visionary moment for Matthew is crucial to the novel. It becomes a utopian blueprint for the kind of society Matthew feels can defeat the self-interested societies formed by capitalism that he spends much of the novel denouncing. It can be compared with the space of possibility about which Homi Bhabha writes, 'an interstitial passage between fixed identifications [...] that

entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, 1994: 4). The Great World entertains difference and threatens hierarchy. It offers a picture of an 'extraordinary mixture of races and cultures' (Farrell, 1978: 163) that promises a new society beyond the confines of colonial inequalities. When Matthew watches a tango on The Great World's dance floor, a feeling of hope engulfs him. He imagines The Great World as actualising his hopes for a more reciprocal society that have stayed with him since his work for the League of Nations:

this was the way Geneva should have been! Instead of that grim segregation by nationality they should all have spent their evenings like this, dancing the tango or the quick-step or the ronggeng or whatever it was with each other: Italians with Abyssinians, British with Japanese, Germans with Frenchmen and so on. (Farrell, 1978: 182)

It is significant that this vision of international harmony is bound up in an image of festivity and recreation. Matthew remembers wistfully 'with what pleasure he had watched the mingling of races on the dance-floor at The Great World' (Farrell, 1978: 332). The Great World articulates a carnivalesque space that is ultimately liminal: at the edges of the discourses of the Empire, and still to suffer the consequences of the Japanese invasion.

Matthew's first visit to The Great World also features his first encounter with Vera Chiang. Vera is a thoroughly enigmatic figure, associated with diversity and transience. Her pejorative delineation as a 'Eurasian' unsettles many of the novel's characters, particularly the Blacketts. She threatens the imaginative binary divide which separates English and Asian subjects, problematising the border between coloniser and colonised.¹ At one level, Vera reflects the character of The Great World, due to the emphasis upon her physicality, sensuousness and festivity. When Vera and Matthew first meet, Matthew is surprised by Vera's immediate familiarity and intimacy. It is important to recognise that Matthew encounters Vera just after his vision of a new, diverse utopia. Vera surprises Matthew by approaching him and revealing her friendship with Matthew's father, Mr Webb. There follows an intimate gesture on the part of Vera which sets the tone for their future relationship:

¹ John G. Butcher has researched the derogation of Eurasians in Singapore during the 1930s. For many, Eurasians were recorded in 'most unflattering terms', and were thought to be biologically defective due to their 'mixed' ancestry. There was an attempt to define Eurasians as a distinct social class, and a hostility to those Eurasians who tried to access European institutions and social circles (Butcher, 1979: 186-187).

On an impulse she flicked open a button of her frock and gently slipped his hand through the opening, clasping it with both of hers more tightly than ever to comfort him, with the result that Matthew now found his damp palm moulding what appeared to be, well, a naked breast [...] they gazed into each other's eyes, hypnotised, and currents of feeling flowed back and forth between them. (Farrell, 1978: 165)

Vera's attitude to her body defies Matthew's sexual mores. Matthew's views on the body divorce the realms of sensation and contemplation. He believes that physical intimacy detracts from the aesthetic pleasure of looking at a beautiful body, as '[t]he effect produced by a beautiful woman is visual [...] touching her does not bring you any closer to her beauty than touching the paint of a Botticelli brings you closer to the beauty of painting' (Farrell, 1978: 302). For Matthew, 'lust and aesthetic pleasure had got hopelessly mixed up' (Farrell, 1978: 303). Matthew's masculine gaze is a problem we must address later. For the moment, it is significant that Vera subverts his lofty view of human beauty and introduces him to an intimacy which initially causes him discomfort. In Chapter 49, as they disrobe, attention is drawn to Matthew's sanitised nakedness, implied by the appearance of Matthew's body as dusty and forgotten:

Matthew also took the opportunity to remove his own clothes and, as he did so, a dense cloud of white dust rose from his loins and hung glimmering in the lamplight. Vera looked surprised at so much dust, wondering whether his private parts might not be covered in cobwebs too. But Matthew hurriedly explained that it was just talcum from his evening bath. (Farrell, 1978: 392)

Vera's forthright approach to sexual contact is not shared by Matthew, whose awkwardness makes him murmur 'politely' (Farrell, 1978: 394) throughout the scene. Vera is much more comfortable with the physical side of their relationship. She is disappointed to find that 'Matthew's grasp of such matters had proven even more elementary than she had feared' (Farrell, 1978: 392). Their lovemaking is very much coterminous with the carnivalesque impulse. For Bakhtin, the carnivalesque is a place where the border of life and death is traversed. Bakhtin explains that, in the carnivalesque, 'the body is most frequently linked to birth or death, to infancy or old age, to the womb or the grave, to the bosom that gives life or swallows it up' (Bakhtin, 1984: 26). Vera brings the process of life and death into proximity. Prior to Matthew and Vera's lovemaking in Chapter 43, Vera takes Matthew to a dying house.

An old man tells Matthew, in Vera's translation, that Blackett and Webb have cast thousands of Malayan rubber smallholders into poverty through exploitative business practices. In a fashion typical of carnivalesque logic, Matthew's thoughts turn quickly from death to life on leaving the house. Matthew reflects that '[t]here is something about a large number of dying people, provided you aren't one of them, that can make you feel extraordinarily full of vitality' (Farrell, 1978: 385). Matthew's feelings of vitality soon become sexual, and the couple return to Vera's small flat. During their lovemaking, Matthew hears someone coughing 'wearily nearby, a long wretched, tubercular cough, the very sound of resignation and despair' (Farrell, 1978: 390). The scene closes by attending again the cough which 'had not ceased for a moment' (Farrell, 1978: 394). It is an important detail, as it counterpoints the lovemaking, with its associations of birth and life, with decay and death. If we read the relationship of Vera and Matthew in terms of the utopian spirit Matthew encounters at The Great World, then their lovemaking symbolises the possibility for reciprocal human contact that moves beyond existing hierarchies of racial difference (that created the conditions of exploitation such as those Matthew learns of at the dying house). The weary cough during their love-making calls attention to a dual process of decay and creation.

However, we must pause to consider the problems that are created by using Vera as a symbol of the festivity and physicality of the carnivalesque. It was noted previously that Walter considers Joan Blackett primarily as a commodity. The novel's critique of commerce involves a critique of patriarchy, as the values of business create scenarios where women find themselves discriminated against because of their gender. When Monty takes Matthew to a brothel in Chapter 25, the narrator dwells upon a young prostitute sat struggling with a maths problem:

Now she was sitting, stark naked, sucking her pencil over a problem which involved the rate at which a tap filled a bath. What, she wondered, was a tap? And what, come to that, was a bath? She would have to consult her aunt who was one of the older women with scarlet cheekbones. (Farrell, 1978: 195)

The prostitute is objectified as a commodity of desire by Monty and his peers, subject to patriarchal values. This is another manifestation of the equation between women with goods that Walter cheerfully made in his presentation of Joan to the ailing Matthew. Yet, in spite of the novel's antipathy to patriarchal values the representation of Vera may perpetuate this

objectifying gaze. Her equation with sensuality perhaps reinforces Orientalist stereotypes of the 'exotic' Eastern woman. Matthew is certainly not interested in Vera primarily as a sexual being, but at a symbolic level the novel does equate her primarily with physicality and desire. Rani Kabbani argues that Orientalist discourse often constructs the Orient from a male perspective as a 'sexual space' (Kabbani, 1986: 67) of desire, a site of escape from the dictates of the metropolis. Historically, Orientalism constructed the cult of the 'foreign woman, racially deviant, erotic because exotic' (Kabbani, 1986: 71). Kabbani draws attention to figure of such 'exotic' women in nineteenth-century painting, and explains how the 'onlooker is admitted into the Orient by visual seduction; he encounters the women in a state of undress, emerging from the intimacy of the bath - in a state of pleasing vulnerability' (Kabbani, 1986: 73). Kabbani's work is pertinent to my discussion. At a number of points in *The Singapore Grip* we might notice Vera occupying a similar position of 'pleasing vulnerability', such as her naked exercises which Matthew spies from the window of the Mayfair in chapter 32. This questions the extent to which the novel opposes colonial representations of gender in its eroticising of a Eurasian female. Vera's symbolic significance threatens to perpetuate a dynamic of colonial discourse. We might, then, compare productively Vera with Hari from *The Siege of Krishnapur*. Both are colonised subjects, 'others' whose cultural difference the novels' narrators struggle to represent without repeating uncritically colonial epistemology. Here we glimpse the limits perhaps in the Empire Trilogy's ability to represent cultural difference. The dense symbolic richness assigned to Vera Chiang is both productive and problematic, an attempt to ironise the assumptions of colonial discourse which threatens their perpetuation.¹

The closing of a liminal space of possibility represented by The Great World occurs as the Japanese invade. The Major worries about the fate of Singapore when faced with the approaching 'homogeneity of Japan. What chance would muddled, divided Malaya have against the efficiency and discipline he had seen everywhere on his visit to Manchuko and to

¹ It could be argued that the problems concerning the representation of Vera are *produced* by Bakhtin's model of the carnivalesque. Lynne Pearce argues that the carnivalesque 'is, at first sight, hideously patriarchal and misogynistic [...] carnival is a 'boy's game', and the temporary overthrow of hierarchy it is supposed to represent not only ignores the issue of women's oppression but also through the image of the 'grotesque body' is instrumental in its promulgation' (Pearce, 1994: 204). Farrell's use of Vera as an epitome of the carnivalesque spirit perhaps adds weight to this argument. Pearce provides a useful survey of criticism concerning the alleged misogyny of Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque in *Reading Dialogics* (Pearce, 1994: 54-60).

Japan itself?' (Farrell, 1978: 272). The Japanese bring with them their own order. Matthew eventually is confined as prisoner of war, who we last see building roads for the Japanese. With the Japanese invasion comes the closing of that liminal space of possibility. We can recognise the end of the carnivalesque spirit by contrasting Matthew and Vera's initial encounter, with their attempt to escape Singapore aboard a ship in Chapter 62. In *The Great World*, Matthew is wrenched away from Vera at their first meeting by a crowd of drunken Dutch sailors:

[suddenly] he was being jostled by a crowd of chuckling Chinese as they fled before the hornpiping sailors. He was pushed this way and that. He and the young woman [Vera] were sundered . . . the hand through which such agreeable sensations had been flowing was brushed away, his spectacles dislodged from his nose and swung perilously from one ear as he struggled to keep his balance. Now a deep-throated laughter blew in his ear, his wrists were grabbed and slung around enormous damp necks, powerful hands closed around his chest, and the next instant he was whisked away [...] (Farrell, 1978: 165)

Note in this quotation the emphasis on laughter, and the physicality of the scene. Matthew exchanges contact with Vera for the embrace of a Dutch sailor. At no time is Matthew threatened in the crowd (indeed, he does not even lose his spectacles). Rather, he is helpless before the vitality and exuberance of the crowd. However, at the quayside in Chapter 62, when Matthew and Vera fail to secure a safe passage by sea, Vera is wrenched from Matthew by a violent mass and left battered beneath their feet:

Again the crowd pressed forward, pinning Matthew's arms to his sides and squeezing the air out of his lungs. He at last managed to free an arm and reach out towards Vera ... but as he did so, he saw the back of her reddish-black hair vanish beneath the thrusting mob. In a rage he shoved his way through the crowd to where he had seen her go down, shouting at people to stand back from her. But nobody seemed to hear. As he groped for her on the ground his hand closed over a piece of wood and he picked it up, flailing about with it until he had driven everyone back from where she lay on the paved quay. (Farrell, 1978: 493)

Matthew is forced into a violent gesture. The lack of attention the crowd pays to his shouts reflects its aggressive nature, and is very far from the images of festive reciprocity enabled in *The Great World*. Importantly, the end of the symbolic space epitomised by *The Great World* is not eradicated permanently. As Matthew works one day building roads for the Japanese, he is visited by a young Chinese who thrusts into his hand a packet containing 'a lump of sugar and two cooked mice' (Farrell, 1978: 566). The packet recalls a meal Vera cooked for Matthew

prior to their lovemaking in Chapter 52, and conjures momentarily their sexual relationship. It also suggests that Vera has survived. The package, at a symbolic level, hints that the possibility for resistance has not been vanquished by the end of the text, and that the carnivalesque possibilities encountered at The Great World still remain a possibility.

The carnivalesque, then, is mobilised as a mode of resistance to the symbolic resources of Empire, and functions to describe a space beyond the legislation of hierarchies of difference. This space may well have been neutralised, but the novel articulates its possibilities in order, perhaps, to make it available for the present. By depicting The Great World at the time of the fall of Singapore, the novel does two things. The first is to pronounce judgement upon the world of business that circumscribes it. This is achieved through the contrast between the intimate, reciprocal relationship achieved by Matthew and Vera, and the impersonal relationships Walter requires for Joan in his adherence to a chivalry of labour. The novel articulates the amoral world of commerce that angered Carlyle, and demonstrates that Carlyle's call for a benevolent feudalism is contradictory and untenable. Capital, in this novel, cannot facilitate meaningful relationships. Second, The Great World is Farrell's attempt to locate a liminal space of possibility at epistemological perimeter of colonialism, where its symbolic resources, like the cannon at the fair, misfire. I shall return to the symbolic space of The Great World in my discussion of Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*. However, as I noted, this space remains of limited efficacy due to the extent that exoticised images of the 'Eastern' female might be perpetuated by the text. The possibilities of The Great World can be seized in order to open possibilities for the present. The novel aims to be dialogic in its articulation of the past that can be harnessed for present purposes. The novel, it must be remembered, ends with a conversation that occurs on the 10th of December, 1976 (less than two years before *The Singapore Grip* was published) between Kate Blackett, now a grown woman, and her husband who the narrator tempts us to assume is Ehrendorf. The conversation concerns a newspaper report 'Ehrendorf' reads about the continuing exploitation of rubber workers in Malaya. The narrator conjectures that, if Ehrendorf is indeed the reader of the newspaper, might he

have said to himself that nothing very much had changed, after all, despite that tremendous upheaval in the Far East? That if even after independence in these Third World countries, it is *still* like that, then something has gone wrong, that

some other, perhaps native, elite has merely replaced the British? (Farrell, 1978: 567)

The novel closes with an attention to the persistence of inequality. The possibilities encapsulated in *The Great World*, and the relationship of Vera and Matthew, have yet to assume something other than a temporary existence, and are perhaps required to challenge the exploitation that still survives. *The Great World* remains an imaginary symbol of utopian possibility beyond the symbolic resources of Empire to be siezed, perhaps, to contest continuing inequalities. In the next chapter I will explore Timothy Mo's attempt to open a similar space in *Sour Sweet*.

By foregrounding the extent to which the symbolic resources of Empire are criticised in Farrell's novels, I have tried to highlight the purpose behind the metafictional elements of the 'Empire Trilogy' that allow Farrell's novels to be read as mobilising postmodernist narrative techniques. *Troubles* is marked by an unresolved tension. It confronts history as a product of language, but defends historical experience as incommensurate to language in its anxious defence of a referent. The dissonance this produces is superseded in *The Siege of Krishnapur* by the attention to discourse as constitutive of a material referent. Representation is deemed not to take one away from history; rather, representation and historical experience are inseparable. However, the extent of the novel's reliance upon the symbolic resources of Empire perhaps perpetuates their dynamics. In *The Singapore Grip*, parody is replaced by travesty, as the past is searched for moments when the symbolic resources of Empire break down in a carnivalesque refutation of the dominant power. However, here too the novel is in danger of perpetuating colonialist epistemology, despite its sophisticated dialogic history that offers strategies for a continued refutation of colonial discourses. The 'Empire Trilogy' offers examples of counter-hegemonic thought but struggles to remain sensitive to cultural differences. Ultimately, this limits the extent to which it challenges the colonial epistemology in its various rewritings of history. Farrell's novels successfully challenge colonial discourse from within, but fail to open a space where colonised subjects are completely free from the operation of colonialist representations. His work is still tethered to the received historiography of the West and

struggles to move successfully beyond the borders of colonial discourse in its attempt to dismantle the symbolic resources of Empire. The difficulties Farrell faces also arise in a related form in Timothy Mo's novels, and it is to them that I now turn.

Chapter Two:

Postmodernism, Pessimism and Critique in Timothy Mo's Fiction

In his review of British fiction in the 1980s, Peter Kemp argues that one of the distinctive features of this period was the emergence of new postcolonial novelists. Their work marked a departure from existing fictions depicting the end of Empire. Timothy Mo is one of Kemp's examples of this new postcolonial writing:

For serious British fiction - Paul Scott, J.G. Farrell - the 1970s had been the decade of depicting imperial disillusion and dissolution. In the 1980s, the picture changes. Though crumbling empires still stretch across the fictional scene, new vistas of post-colonialism open up. (Kemp, 1992: 216)

This chapter will suggest that the positions of Farrell and Mo are not as different as Kemp assumes. Both explore similar terrains and face analogous problems in their fiction. Their positions are related but disjunctive. Kemp is one of many critics who assume Mo's novels to date - *The Monkey King* (1978), *Sour Sweet* (1982), *An Insular Possession* (1986), *The Redundancy of Courage* (1991), and *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* (1995) - are exemplary postcolonial texts. This is because Mo is perceived to be 'Anglo-Chinese' (Facknitz, 1991: 648). He was born in Hong Kong to an English mother and Cantonese father. At the age of ten he moved to England, in 1960, where he later attended Oxford University and read history. The fact of Mo's birth in Hong Kong convinces many that his work is primarily preoccupied with postcolonial concerns, especially as he left a colonised location to be educated at, and later work in, the old centre of the British Empire. For Mark A.R. Facknitz, Mo is 'a quintessential writer of two Empires, the Celestial and the British, the one defeated, the second now gone beyond decadence to dust' (Facknitz, 1991: 649). Mo's novels are often read as bringing together elements of English and Chinese culture to produce an expanded form of English fiction. For Mark Lawson, writing when *The Redundancy of Courage* was published, Mo's work rejects 'what [Mo] sees as the parochial locales and low action-quotient of traditional British fiction. Certainly his four novels to date demonstrate an impressive expansion of location and scope' (Lawson, 1991: 52).¹ This argument is often raised in relation to Mo's third novel, *An Insular*

¹ Lawson argues that *The Monkey King* 'can be read as an interesting relocation of the traditional English

Possession. Many assume it incorporates the alleged episodic and present tense narrative of Chinese fiction into the conventional British historical novel. Richard Todd reads it as a 'Cantonese novel in English' (Todd, 1988: 124), and C. Mary Turnbull similarly praises Mo for 'combin[ing] the traditions of English literature and the Chinese Novel' (Turnbull, 1990: 129). Bruce King applauds how 'Mo broadens the Western novel, with its focus on individuals, to the inclusiveness of the Chinese narrative concerned with a group' (King, 1991a: 206). Indeed, for King, Mo shares affinities with Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, V.S. Naipaul and Buchi Emecheta in 'invigorating English literature by the selective adaptation of other cultures' (King, 1991a: 210). As these arguments demonstrate, Mo is often regarded as a writer who expands the horizons of the English novel.

Critics who applaud Mo for incorporating elements of Chinese culture into English literature ignore at their peril Mo's troubled relations with both. In an interview with Kazuo Ishiguro in 1982, Mo claimed that he could speak only a 'rudimentary O level Cantonese. I can't read or write it. I don't want to learn it either. There's nothing in the culture worth expending that much energy for' (Ishiguro, 1982b: 50). Gay Firth goes so far as to propose that Mo's relationship with Chinese culture is so small as to be irrelevant, and claims support for this from his interview with Mo:

Neither is [Mo] in doubt that it is fallacious, facile, and downright daft to call him a 'Chinese' writer writing in English. The question is not even allowed to arise: the categorical denial, unspoken, hands like a hologram, three-dimensional, over his head. It is fair and right to take Timothy Mo, like Mo's work, at his word. The word is English. (Firth, 1986: 38)

Yet, Mo resists the categorisation of his fiction as conventionally English. As he told Mark Lawson, '[a]s a reader, I actually enjoy people like Muriel Spark and Antony Powell, I understand that great English love of irony and understatement. As a writer, I'm actually repelled by it. It's technically so unambitious' (Lawson, 1991: 50). In short, to assert that Mo brings together elements of two cultures is to ignore the extent to which he feels remote from, and is critical of, English and Chinese culture.

comedy [...] a post-colonial *Lucky Jim* (Lawson, 1991: 52). *Sour Sweet* 'was in the same lightly exotic style but followed a logical progression to consider the Chinese in London through the medium of an assiduous, assimilating family menaced by the Triads [...] something like a London Chinese *Brighton Rock*' (Lawson, 1991: 52).

My reading of Mo's novels contests the view that they happily combine elements from English and Chinese. I have chosen to focus upon three of Mo's novels - *Sour Sweet*, *An Insular Possession*, and *The Redundancy of Courage* - that in different ways articulate tumultuous moments in history where cultures encounter each other. The consequences are often acrimonious, rather than harmonious, and produce fractures between and within cultures as opposed to the happy fusions many presume to be characteristic of Mo's writing. *Sour Sweet* depicts the mixed fortunes of Chinese migrants to England during the early 1960s, when London's Chinatown was established. *An Insular Possession* is set at the time of the colonisation of Hong Kong, during the first Opium War that occurred between November 1839 and July 1842. *The Redundancy of Courage* recalls the current Indonesian occupation of East Timor in its depiction of the colonisation of a small island near the coast of Australia by their neighbours. The range of Mo's fiction makes it difficult to identify continuities or characteristics that can be announced as typical of his work. But, as I argue, these novels are to different degrees pessimistic about the compatibility of postmodern and postcolonial practices. They attempt to bear witness to the voices of marginalised peoples that have been silenced by the West in differing ways. Yet their success is limited. First, I examine briefly the representation of space in *Sour Sweet*, and compare it with Farrell's symbol of The Great World in *The Singapore Grip*. Next, I consider the function of parody in *An Insular Possession*. This novel seems to suggest that a postcolonial critical history can be enabled by postmodernist forms of representation. Yet, it leaves unanswered the question of how those subject to colonial power gain a voice with recourse to postmodernist narrative strategies. This issue is the focus of my reading of *The Redundancy of Courage*. I conclude the chapter by considering this novel as a warning against the mobilisation of postmodernism for the purposes of effective oppositional critique.

***Sour Sweet*: Interstitial spaces of survival**

Set in the early years of the 1960s, *Sour Sweet* depicts the fortunes of two groups of Chinese who have migrated to London.¹ One group is the family of the Chens, consisting of

¹ As Lynn Pan argues, the birth of London's Chinatown in the 1960s 'coincided with a new phase of Chinese immigration into Britain. Between 1962 and 1966 the number of Chinese dependants and

Chen, his wife Lily, their son Man Kee, and Lily's sister Mui. The other is the Triads,¹ a Chinese secret society whose affairs include the trafficking of drugs in London. The Triads are administered by Red Cudgel and his deputy White Paper Fan. Chen is employed as a waiter in a restaurant in Chinatown. When his father runs into debt in Hong Kong, Chen borrows money from the Triads. Later he is approached by one of the Triads, Roman Fok, and told he must assist in their illicit trade in narcotics. In an attempt to escape from this task, Chen buys a house he believes is remote from the Triads' influence in London. Here he opens a Chinese take-away with Lily and Mui. Lily remains oblivious to his involvement with the Triads. Eventually Chen is located and ordered killed by White Paper Fan as part of an attempt to remove Red Cudgel as the Triads' leader. A bewildered Lily is left alone at the take-away, mystified by Chen's disappearance.

The novel is at one level concerned with migrancy, and the difficulties involved in building a life in a new country. As migrant Chinese, the Chens face two forces of compulsion. The first concerns the attitudes of the British to the influx of migrants in the 1960s. The novel opens with the narrator describing Chen's sense of himself as an 'interloper' (Mo, 1982: 1) in the eyes of the British. He 'could sense [this] in between his shoulder-blades as he walked past emptying public houses on his day off; in the shrinking of his scalp as he heard bottles rolling in the gutter; in a descending silence at a dark bus-stop and its subsequent lifting; in an unspoken complicity between himself and others like him, not necessarily his own' (Mo, 1982: 1). The second comes from the Triads, who control both the legitimate and illicit businesses in Chinatown. The violent world of the Triads is, of course, a caricature of Chinese culture. But the Triads function as an agency of control derived from the Chens' inherited culture, one that they attempt to live beyond. In short, *Sour Sweet* depicts a family attempting to clear a space where they might live at a remove from both British and Chinese coercive attitudes. As the

relatives arriving from Hong Kong - wives, children, elderly parents - rose almost tenfold' (Pan, 1990: 308). Most of these migrants, like Chen himself, were from the New Territories. Pan dates the emergence of Chinatown to 1965, when five Chinese restaurants were opened in Gerrard Street (Pan, 1990: 307). Chen works in the largest of five 'Cantonese eating-houses' (Mo, 1982: 27) just off Gerrard Street.

¹ The Triads emerged from three secret societies that originated in the southern provinces of China. Lynn Pan records these as the Heaven and Earth society, the Three in One Society and the Three Dots Society (Pan, 1990: 20).

novel opens, there is already a sense of their existence between two cultures. The Chens have lived in Britain for four years, 'which was long enough to have lost their place in the society from which they had emigrated but not long to feel comfortable in the new' (Mo, 1982: 1). *Sour Sweet* explores the interstitial space between the influence of the British and the Chinese, and speculates about its potential value. We might compare this space with The Great World in *The Singapore Grip*. Both Farrell's novel and *Sour Sweet* explore places of possibility that problematise the conventional boundaries of cultural difference. The Great World was a festive space of recreation, an utopian ideal that offered an alternative to the hegemony of the symbolic resources of Empire. *Sour Sweet* tries to open a similar space, but one that is more practical. I approach the representation of space in *Sour Sweet* with recourse to Homi Bhabha's configuration of the postmodern and the postcolonial. The Chens, I argue, seek to clear a space for themselves between English and Chinese coercion that can be understood in Bhabha's terms. Importantly, this involves a consequential refashioning of the relation between the past and present.

In the previous chapter I argued that Farrell struggled to represent characters regarded as colonised subjects, such as Hari in *The Siege of Krishnpur* and Vera in *The Singapore Grip*. *Sour Sweet* overcomes this problem. This novel's narrator moves between different cultures more dynamically than Farrell's narrators, who are to an extent confined to colonialist epistemologies despite their repudiation of Empire. This can be demonstrated briefly by attending to the translations made by the narrator of *Sour Sweet*. The narrator's representation of the characters' thoughts and speech negotiates between English and Chinese. This is evidenced by Lily Chen's thoughts on acquiring the house that will be the Dah Ling take-away, where Lily and her family move after Chen becomes involved with the Triads. Lily is appalled at the thought that the take-away's previous owners could have died unnoticed in her house: 'What a society! Which room might the old person(s) have lain (dead and shamefully) alone, pondered Lily, thinking in Cantonese in which, conveniently for such musing, there was no distinction between plural and singular' (Mo, 1982: 90). The unique grammatical characteristics of Cantonese are represented in English by a narrator attentive to the unique features of the Chinese language. The narrator fashions a form of English responsive to the linguistic

conventions of another culture. Similarly, when Lily first meets Mrs. Law, the narrator provides important information about their exchange:

'Handsome boy,' the strange woman complimented Lily in Cantonese. As Lily merely smiled without saying anything, she repeated her remark in English: 'The boy good looking.'

'No, not at all. He's a very plain child.'

'Ah, so you are Chinese. I thought you could be Filipino.' The woman used the idiom 'Person of Tang,' a peculiar Southern idiom. 'But not from Hong Kong. Singapore, maybe?'

'Kwangsi.' Lily smiled.

'I thought your accent was strange [...]' (Mo, 1982: 42)

The narrator accommodates within English the nuances of thought and speech otherwise invisible to English speakers. Indeed, the characters' use of the English language makes them appear very different. When Lily speaks English she seems 'hostile and nervous; a cross between a petulant child and a nagging old shrew, neither of which descriptions adequately fitted the mature and outward-going woman who was Lily Chen' (Mo, 1982: 135). Farrell's narrators lack the ability to attend to the nuances of languages other than English.

Farrell's symbolic space of *The Great World* was understood with recourse to Bakhtin's concept of the subversive carnivalesque. Let me approach the possibilities of a similar space in *Sour Sweet* through Homi Bhabha's essay 'The Postmodern and The Postcolonial'. Bhabha argues that one of the consequences of migrancy is the loss of the view that cultures are discretely different, with well-defined borders: '[t]he natural(ised), unifying discourse of 'nation', 'peoples', or authentic 'folk' tradition, those embedded myths of culture's particularity, cannot be easily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition' (Bhabha, 1994: 172). Migrancy displaces the migrant from the myths of their culture's particularity. But it also requires a new space where their new position can be accommodated, one displaced from the holistic models of culture. As I noted in the introduction, Bhabha argues that this space is discovered at 'complex cultural and political boundaries' (Bhabha, 1994: 173). I believe *Sour Sweet* explores a space of possibility on the cusp of those 'cultural and political boundaries' that mark the limits of the influence of both the British and the Triads. Each perpetuates a holistic nativist pedagogy by projecting a sense of discrete British or Chinese

identity. Chen seeks to live beyond the influence of both by opening their Chinese take-away. Yet, the novel emphasises the fragility of this space and checks the optimism and certainty that permeates Bhabha's theory.

In his description of Chinatown the narrator of *Sour Sweet* dwells upon a new space that has been opened within Britain, unwittingly perhaps, as a consequence of the establishment of Chinatown. Consider the description of Chen's daily journey to the Ho Ho restaurant, where he works as a waiter:

Chen's restaurant was in Soho, just off Gerrard street and its complex of travel agencies, supermarkets, fortune tellers, quack acupuncturists and Chinese cinema clubs, in a quiet lane whose only establishments were restaurants. At the end of the row was a passage with a double bend, so that what seemed to *strangers* like a blind alley was in reality a concealed entrance, constructed on the same principle as a lobster trap. A sharp right turn after passing an iron bollard took the knowledgeable or *intrepid* into a gloomy canyon formed by the blind backs of two forty-feet high Georgian terraces. Rubbish filled the alley. At night the rats scabbled in the piles of rotting vegetable leaves and soggy cardboard boxes. There was a muffled silence in the enclosure. At the other end another series of baffles led, *quite suddenly*, into the brightness and sound of Leicester Square. This was Chen's habitual short-cut to the Underground station. (Mo, 1982: 26-27 - emphasis added)

This passage is interesting for several reasons. The detail accumulated in the description seems recorded for those who are unfamiliar with Chinatown and also, quite obviously, English-speakers. The passageway is a short-cut for Chen but appears a dead end for 'strangers'. To whom does this space belong? Native Londoners, it seems, are unfamiliar with this particular route. Those that hazard beyond the sharp right turn are either 'knowledgeable' - like Chen or the narrator - or 'intrepid', the latter term conveying a sense of an explorer wandering into an unknown and faintly threatening space. The use of the phrase 'quite suddenly' in describing the emergence into Leicester Square suggests an element of surprise for the stranger, a surprise not shared by the Chen to whom the emergence into the square would be quite familiar. Spatially, the passage is between Chinatown and conventional London. It is not the sole property of either place. The passageway suggests the space the Chens search for in the novel, one that is between the English and the Chinese (represented by the obligation of the Triads). It is a space both enabling and dangerous, one that provides a helpful passage, but is for the intrepid only.

The acquisition of the Chens' take-away can be understood as an attempt to locate a

space that is interstitial, and both enabling and dangerous. Chen wants to open a business as far away from the reach of the Triads as possible. The house he eventually buys exists at a place that is also at a remove from the English. The narrator's description of the house and its surroundings suggest that a new space is being opened by the Chens that had not existed previously in quite the same form. Consider the narration of the Chens' journey to their new home, as they walk through an unfamiliar and deserted part of London:

It became apparent that the main road formed an unofficial kind of boundary. The side they were now on was older, more dilapidated than the north side, a change which took place with startling swiftness. They had been walking for three minutes and already the houses were visibly decayed. They passed a derelict terrace, the doors and windows covered with corrugated tin sheets; through rusted holes in the crinkled metal they could see grass growing in the roofless rooms. There was still a sofa in one of the ruined houses and its springs had burst out of the rotten cloth like a robot's innards. This was more like it, Chen thought with satisfaction; they would start here. It was ideal. (Mo, 1982: 84)

The location of their house is on this site, beyond a boundary. It rests upon the remains of a previous community. The site bears the traces of an earlier habitat, but it now lies vacant. If this derelict space signifies the decline of a community that was once the home of the British, for the Chens it is a place of new possibility. Its existence beyond the boundary of the main road is perhaps symbolic; it suggests that Chen has discovered a boundary that marks the limits of the influence exerted by both the Triads and the English. It is interesting that the Chens also consider a property *within* the boundary of the main road, one that is being repaired by some workmen. The workmen unsettle Chen as they remind him of the 'peppery' (Mo, 1982: 83) English he avoids when walking past pubs at night. He recalls that sense of hostility towards his difference that is mentioned in the novel's opening. But beyond the boundary of the main road there seems no interest in rebuilding or maintaining the houses that lie derelict. The British do not seem to cross the boundary regularly. The 'demolition site' (Mo, 1982: 85) offers the Chens the possibility of establishing a space within Britain that is not the sole property of the English and Chinese. The only other occupant Chen meets on the site is Mr Constantinides, the proprietor of a garage, who is presumably a Greek migrant. The house Chen eventually chooses in this location is similarly suggestive:

Their shop, their home, could not pretend to have been anything other than an ordinary house up till then. Originally it had been the eastern wing of a terrace of three houses. The centre and western wing had been hit by a bomb in the war and subsequently demolished but a freak effect of the blast had left Chen's house unscathed. Two big braces, such as they had seen on the big demolition site, supported the western wall. The previous occupant, and Chen had no idea who he or she had been, had left over five years ago. No one had wanted the property. Being so near a garage hadn't helped either. (Mo, 1982: 89-90)

Like the site as a whole, the house is vacant and unwanted. The fact that its west wing has been demolished while its eastern wing remains is particularly apposite. It tempts us to consider the demolition site as the beginnings of another 'east wing', a place that will support those newly arrived from the East. These forgotten ruins existing just beyond a boundary becomes a site of possibility for the Chens, a place they can fashion for themselves without outside interference.

It is, however, a fragile space. The Chens continue to be encroached upon by those forces across the boundary that Chen in particular wishes to escape. Once the Chens have settled in their home, decorated it and opened the take-away, they are still threatened by forces of coercion. In particular, Lily and Mui in different ways work hard to defend their space from threats from beyond the border. At one point, Man Kee suffers an attack at his school. This prompts Lily to teach her son some basic boxing techniques she learned from her father as a child. She is unwilling to approach the school authorities to complain, as '[t]hat way you drew attention to yourself, made trouble for the powers that be, and then they got at you indirectly' (Mo, 1982: 231). Mui is critical of the tradition of fighting that Lily teaches her son, condemning it as a 'fierce and mindless' (Mo, 1982: 233) response to Man Kee's attack. Lily is motivated by a continuing fear of encroachment, and her resilience and determination make it difficult to condemn her response to the aggression of others. The description of Lily teaching Man Kee to fight emphasises the powerful mixture of tenderness and resilience that characterises Lily's defence of her space which she believes is under continual threat:

'Give me hand son, Son.' She stroked the pretty, dimpled fingers and palm, ever so slightly roughened and, turning them over, gently pushed back a ragged cuticle she had noticed. Never would she let anyone misshape or hurt this hand; she wouldn't even have allowed Father. She curled his fingers against the palm of his hand and placed his thumb outside. 'Son, this is fist.' (Mo, 1982: 231)

Mui also protects their space. She devises the means to keep the business financially

independent. She provides the link between the take-away and Mr. Constantinides' garage, carrying food to the many truck drivers who buy from the take-away by placing an order at the garage. Her connections with the truck drivers enable the Chens to buy a cheap supply of Coca-Cola which they sell at a large profit. It is also her 'brainwave' (Mo, 1982: 141) to sell chips that prove highly successful. Like Lily, Mui also uses some of things she learnt as a child to cope with with the contingencies of the present. For example, when Mui buys a van from Mr Constantinides, she defends her decision to a sceptical Lily by recounting a lesson she learnt from her father:

' [...] Which of Mr. Constantinides' cars was best? I will tell you: the little one with the window so dirty you couldn't even look inside. It had a stout heart. Do you remember the story Father used to tell us about the blind sage and how he could tell which of the Duke of Chou's race-horses was the fastest?'

Lily smiled pityingly at Mui.

But Mui was right. The motor ran sweetly when an obliging mechanic tuned it for them. When Lily kicked the tyres (secretly hoping to bring down the van down in a heap of folding, groaning metal) the tyres were hard and springy. (Mo, 1982: 147-148)

Importantly, the sisters do not defend their space with recourse to a blind faith in the validity of inherited learning. The tension between Lily and Mui throughout the novel forces each to appropriate critically the knowledge they learned in childhood in China, conscious of its potential shortcomings. Mui objects to Lily teaching Man Kee to fight; Lily scoffs at Mui's reasons for choosing the van. This critical revisiting of the past, I suggest, is one component of their attempt to open a space beyond boundaries. As Bhabha argues, to move to a space beyond the limits of received culture is not an act of complete repudiation: '[t]he 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past [...] there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* - here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth' (Bhabha, 1994: 1). Lily's and Mui's defence of their space is an example of that continual movement back and forth between the past and the present for the purposes of survival. They cannot access the past nostalgically, without an awareness of its potential limitations. This is one purpose of their several disagreements throughout the novel. They appropriate the past critically to confront present contingencies. As such, they protect their

fragile space by negotiating a new model of history. It is a model, I believe, coterminous with Bhabha's notion of the 'past-present'. It involves the 'renew[al] of the past, refiguring it as contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living' (Bhabha, 1994: 7). The sisters select from their past in an attempt to forge a new life in the present in-between Chinese and English cultures. They re-examine their past critically and appropriate it to defend their space in the present.

But the Chens never really break free from the influence of the British and the Triads. Lily is unsettled by the visits of the tax-man and the social worker in chapter 22. These visits are a reminder that the Chens' space is still not fully their own to do with as they please. Lily possesses a sense of her superiority to the English, but she makes well-intentioned attempts to communicate with her customers, particularly younger women. These attempts serve only to emphasise again the antagonism of the English. In one scene, she smiles pleasantly at a young girl sat waiting for food, but feels snubbed by the girl who stares back 'insolently and rudely' (Mo, 1982: 136). The influence of the Triads also reaches across the boundary. They locate Chen's whereabouts through the remittances Lily sends to Hong Kong, as these reveal his postal district in London. The murder of Chen exposes the fragility of the Chens' space. Coercive forces still have the power to move back and forth across the symbolic boundary of the main road, confronting the Chens with a series of continuing challenges. The Chens' space is not particularly stable nor as remote from coercion as Chen and Lily might wish, and this is a cause of concern in the text. The boundary that separates their home and the influence of the British and the Triads is permeable, not absolute. The Chens ultimately remain tethered to the forces they wish to live beyond.

In *The Singapore Grip*, a space where the symbolic resources of Empire misfired was closed by the invasion of the Japanese forces. It remained an utopian possibility only. *Sour Sweet* suggests in more concrete terms the productivity of a similar space where coercive forces no longer function. But there remains a fracture between the promise of this space and its establishment. The novel closes with the departure of Mui from the Chens' take-away. Mui leaves to get married. She invites Lily to join her, but Lily declines. The vocabulary used by

the narrator in describing the sisters' separation is interesting in the current context:

this was the end of the old life, the life of the loving, closely knit family Mui and Lily knew they had been. [...] There had been parturition, the single cell had contracted, swelled, and through the wall had escaped matter from its very nucleus. Now there were two cells, sharing the same territory, happily co-existing but quite autonomous.

And, later, Lily discovered there was nothing much to regret about this, not too much to be wistful about; or only in so far as it gave her something in common with Mui. (Mo, 1982: 277)

There is a powerful dissonance in this passage that raises questions about the space the Chens make for themselves in the novel. Mui's leaving marks an end to a way of life that emphasised resilience and resourcefulness. The 'loving, closely knit' family may have been a place of tension, as evidenced by the friction between Lily and Mui. But there is a sense that something is also lost in its dissolution. The narrator informs us that the new units of the family will happily co-exist. But in the next paragraph, doubts are raised immediately about Lily's happiness. The fact that she takes time to learn that there was nothing 'much' to regret about Mui's departure suggests a melancholy on Lily's part. Lily's disquiet implies that something is being lost as her family splits. A dissonance is created through the conjuring of two moods, one happy, the other more muted and pensive. This dissonance is supplemented by the metaphor of parturition the narrator uses to describe what has happened to the Chens. On the one hand, parturition suggests fertility, growth and development. It implies that the Chens have survived happily, and have coped positively with the challenge of their migrancy. But parturition is also an organic process of change and refinement, devoid of stability or fixity. Such stability might be vital to a strategy of survival. The mobility of the family unit perhaps disqualifies the possibility of a loving, closely knit family. This constant mobility and emphasis upon change is a source of trauma as well as a strategy for survival. The splitting of the family perhaps disqualifies resources that could prove useful to Lily and Mui, in particular a protective sense of community that can compensate for the disorientation of living in a new place. This novel, then, can be read *against* Bhabha's theory of the postcolonial perspective. If we approach Bhabha's thought through *Sour Sweet*, I believe we discover a pessimism that constitutes a critique of the productivity of a space at the cultural boundaries of the English and the Chinese. For Bhabha, boundaries are exciting and valuable as they 'initiate new signs of identity, and

innovate sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha, 1994: 1-2). *Sour Sweet* can be read as examining this space with suspicion, perhaps pointing up the difficulties involved in preserving a space between and beyond cultures, one that is not already the property of any one cultural group. We are left to ponder the extent to which the Chens have negotiated successfully strategies sufficient for survival as well as their success in fulfilling the promise that the demolition site suggested. I believe *Sour Sweet* qualifies an enthusiasm for Bhabha's space of the postcolonial by exposing its fragility and exploring the trauma of protecting it from coercive forces that still have agency.

The pessimism of *Sour Sweet* emerges in different forms in Mo's next novels, *An Insular Possession* and *The Redundancy of Courage*. My discussion of these novels will examine the combination of postmodern and postcolonial practices in the contestation of hegemonic historical narratives. Both novels, to very different degrees, can be read as adopting an anxious and pessimistic position concerning the productivity of postmodernism for a postcolonial critical history. The space of possibility that emerges on the cusp of postmodernism and postcolonialism perhaps promises more than it facilitates. In Mo's next novels the promise of productive relationship between postmodern and postcolonial practices for writing history is interrogated with increasing suspicion.

An Insular Possession: displacing the archive

An Insular Possession depicts life in Canton, Macao and Hong Kong between 1834 and 1842 through the compilation of many different narrative points of view. As Mark A.R. Facknitz argues, '[e]ndowed with many voices, postmodernist in conception, [...] *An Insular Possession* is a novel of multiplicities' (Facknitz, 1991: 649). The novel modulates between several narrative voices and involves the parody of a number of narrative modes. These include anonymous third-person narration, diaries, letters, newspaper reports, transcriptions of court proceedings, and - in two appendices - a gazette of Hong Kong place names and a personal memoir. Facknitz argues that the effect of these multiple points of view is the disqualification of a fixed, coherent narrative. In the shifting from one perspective to another, 'the certainties of the previous position are called into question' (Facknitz, 1991: 649). Consequently, as Elaine

Yee Lin Ho argues, the novel obeys Linda Hutcheon's rubric of historiographic metafiction, particularly as it complicates the division between true and false representation by revealing the extent to which all representation is provisional, and cannot offer an objective picture of the referent. As Hutcheon indeed states, '[h]istoriographic metafiction suggests that [...] there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths' (Hutcheon, 1988: 109). Ho's reading of *An Insular Possession* admits the influence of the 'postmodern theoretical perspectives of Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, and others' (Ho, 1994: 53). In her comments on the appendices, she concludes that the novel is ultimately a postmodernist celebration of the complicated border between history and fiction that is appropriate to Hutcheon's model of historiographic metafiction:

The reader may be tempted to verify the existence of the gazetteer, the sources of the entries of real historical persons and places, and perhaps even the real-life models of Chase and Eastman [two of the novel's main characters]. Tempted, yes; but to proceed to do so would be an attempt to determine what is fact and what is fiction, to separate the real from the fantastical, and thus fall into the novel's ludic trap, which precisely subverts established boundaries between the two. It would also be an attempt to enact closures upon the debates about the mimetic, which it is the project of the novel to re-imagine and carnivalize. Tantalised, teased, tempted, the reader is invited instead to embrace such processes as the pleasure of his/her reading, and in doing so, to enter into community with the choric voices of the postmodern novel. (Ho, 1994: 61-62)

I quote Ho at length because my reading departs from the argument that *An Insular Possession* subverts the border between truth and falsehood, or history and fiction, for the purposes of a postmodernist celebration of the instability of all knowledge. Such a reading is in danger of passing over the critical agenda of the novel that emerges in its approach to the historical archive. My reading of *An Insular Possession* does not heed Ho's warning, but examines the the novel's most intimate relationship with archival documents. This is not for the purposes of making claims about the authenticity of its representation of history. Rather, my reading concentrates upon the extent to which this novel critiques the materials collected in a specific historical archive, since the archive has agency over the perspectives that can be produced as a consequence of using it as a point of historical reference. In so doing, the novel departs from the model of history that Ho - using Hutcheon and White - reads it as supporting. *An Insular Possession*, I argue, may be postmodernist in its form, but it proffers conclusions that diverge

from a celebration of the textuality of history for purposes coterminous with postcolonial practices. It is a dissonant voice in the postmodern chora Ho describes. Yet, a tension between postmodern and postcolonial practices still remains. *An Insular Possession* is at one level a productive rewriting of history, but one launched from within the parameters of colonial discourse. Its ability to open a space that bears witness to the colonised Chinese remains limited.

As Ho admits, her reading of the novel as complicating the division between history and fiction is also indebted to work of Hayden White, and his work is a good place to begin reading the role of the archive in *An Insular Possession*. White often concerns himself with the overlapping processes that are common to the production of historical and fictional narratives. He wishes to consider historical narratives as, in his view, 'what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found' (White, 1978: 82). For White, the historian 'makes stories out of mere chronicles', encoding chronicles into a 'form with which we have already become familiar in our literary culture' (White, 1978: 91). For this reason, the production of historical perspective is placed squarely in the hands of the historian:

All the historian needs to do to transform a tragic into a comic situation is to shift his point of view or change the scope of his perceptions [...] How a given historical situation is to be configured depends upon the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction making, operation. (White, 1978: 85)

There are two consequences to White's model of history. First, it gives the historian absolute mastery over the historical archive. The historical chronicles he or she consults have no significant narrative structure that codes events into meaningful patterns. Chronicles 'simply 'begin' when the chronicler starts recording events' (White, 1973: 6). No interpretation clouds the chronicles, as each 'event is simply 'there' as an element of a series; it does not 'function' as a story element' (White, 1973: 7). The historian is deemed to seize existing chronicles of history and structure them in whatever way he or she sees fit. Second, White's model presumes a curious omniscience on the part of the historian. Because the historian can shift his or her perspective at will, selecting the one s/he prefers, it is assumed that the historian is free to review all the available options at will. The flippancy registered in White's words - 'all the

historian has to do' - is rather dangerous. It assumes that the materials the historian consults when writing history are available for unlimited interpretation, as they can acquire a number of meanings as a consequence of the position they are made to occupy in various historiographical structures. In this model, agency for the production of historical narratives lies solely with the historian. Dissatisfied with this thesis, Dominick LaCapra argues that White assumes the historian is

extremely permissive. The problem of subjective relativism in White's 'poetics' of historiography stem[s] from a neo-idealist and formalist conception of the mind of the historian as a free shaping agent with respect to an inert, neutral documentary record [...] This view tend[s] to obscure both the way people lived, told, and wrote 'stories' and the way the documentary record *is itself always textually processed before any given historian comes to it*. Historians in this sense are confronted with phenomena that pose resistances to their shaping imagination and that present complex problems for their attempt to interpret and reconstruct the past. (LaCapra, 1985: 34-35 - emphasis added)

In White's model of history, the limitless possibilities for narrating history defy any closure because, in White's words, 'every mimesis can be shown to be distorted and can serve, therefore, as an occasion for yet another description of the same phenomenon' (White, 1978: 3). This view would seem to inform Ho's reading of *An Insular Possession* as a text that defies closure. But LaCapra's attention to the ways that archival records - White's neutral chronicles - actively resist shaping by historians damages White's assumption that the historian is the sole, omniscient agent in the production of historical narratives. There are consequences involved in using uncritically historical chronicles, because a shaping has already occurred in the production of those documents that testify to that occasion.

To understand how the shaping of those materials housed in the archive affects the production of history, it is useful to consider Foucault's definition of the archive in *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Foucault departs from a definition of the archive as 'the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past' (Foucault, 1972: 128-129). Instead, he wishes to consider the epistemological structures within which those texts were initially produced. The archive is a site where the epistemological structures of past epochs can be discovered. The archive houses the 'system of statements (whether events or things)' (Foucault, 1972: 128) that have been produced in the past. By reading the archive we are required not just to examine what has been recorded, but also the

legitimizing structures which allowed such statements to be produced and disseminated, which attached significance to certain ways of seeing and granted privileged status to specific statements. For Foucault, the archive is best thought of as 'that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and that which embodies it, defines at the outset the system of its enunciability' (Foucault, 1972: 129). To conceive of the archive as exposing the general system of the formation of statements is to approach a politicised view of the archive as a site of power. Foucault's work warns us against trusting the archive as the locus of reliable knowledge about the past. The granting of legitimacy to the archive might preserve the discursive practices that acquire meaning within a system of the enunciability preserved in the archive. This system is made possible by what Foucault calls a '*historical a priori* [...] the group of rules that characterise a discursive practice' (Foucault, 1972: 127). A radical rewriting of history might interrogate these rules, and question the relations of power that legislated the status of the statements in the archive, rather than take the texts housed in the archive as authentic depictions of the referent. This is what is at stake when Foucault demands that the archive should be interrogated in order to establish the 'system of discursivity, [...] the enunciative possibilities and impossibilities that it lays down. The archive is first the law of what can be said' (Foucault, 1972: 129).

I read *An Insular Possession* as an interrogation of the Western system of enunciability prevalent at the time of the colonisation of Hong Kong, rather than a general postmodern celebration of the fictionality of history. Its postmodern narrative features - particularly parody - are strategies for rewriting a specific history to reveal its received system of enunciability. The rewriting of the history of Hong Kong is an attempt to call attention to this system by pointing out the relationship between archival documents and colonialist epistemology. In making this argument, it is important to note the intimate relationship the novel has with those texts produced at the time of the colonisation of Hong Kong. This is discovered by examining briefly the novel's major characters. As Facknitz argues, '[s]ome minor characters' (Facknitz, 1991: 694) that existed at the time of the colonisation of Hong Kong certainly appear in the novel. Two examples are Howqua, one of the Hong merchants in Canton, and Captain Charles

Elliott,¹ the British Plenipotentiary in Canton between 1836 and 1841. Many other minor characters could be cited - such as Mrs. Marjoribanks, Lord Napier and J.R. Morrison.² It seems, however, that the novel's three main characters - Gideon Chase, Harry O'Rourke and Walter Eastman - are fictional creations. But a review of the archive reveals this is not the case. They can, instead, be aligned with existing figures who produced texts about the colonisation of Hong Kong. Gideon Chase seems modelled upon Gideon Nye, an American businessman working for one of the few companies allowed to trade in Canton in the 1830s.³ Nye delivered a lecture to the Canton business community on the 31st of January, 1873 entitled *The Morning of My Life in China*. Its title recalls Appendix II in *An Insular Possession*, that features '[e]dited passages from *The Morning of My Days*, the unfinished and unpublished autobiography of Professor G.H. Chase' (Mo, 1986: 663). Nye's lecture, which I shall have cause to mention in more detail, contains within it many of the events that occur in *An Insular Possession*, and suggests historical counterparts for Mo's fictional characters. One incident Nye records is a performance of Sheridan's *The Rivals*. The part of Mrs Malaprop was acted by an artist of Irish descent, George Chinnery (Nye, 1873: 32). Similarly in *An Insular Possession*, a performance of *The Rivals* is described in Chapter 16, with the Irish artist Harry O'Rourke playing Mrs Malaprop. Chinnery seems a precise analogue of O'Rourke. One of the first things we learn about O'Rourke is his ugliness. As he says to Walter Eastman, 'I had the distinction of being the ugliest man in Macao and in Canton the second ugliest. People would point: "There goes O'Rourke," they would say, "the ugliest fellow I ever saw", and my appearance would thus excite comment' (Mo, 1986: 12-13). In his biography of Chinnery, Robin Hutcheon points out

¹ It is perhaps part of Mo's playful approach to the archive that he spells Captain Elliott with an extra 't'. In each of the histories of Hong Kong I have consulted, Elliott is spelt with only one 't'.

² Mrs Marjoribanks was the wife of Charles Marjoribanks, chairman of the East India Company's Select Committee of Supracargoes from 1829 to 1830. William John, the eighth Lord Napier, was the first Chief Superintendent of trade appointed by Britain, who replaced the Select Committee of Supracargoes in representing British trading interests in China. His failed attempt in 1834 to meet with the Viceroy of Kwangtung and Kwangsi is related entirely through extracts from the *Canton Monitor* in chapter 7 of *An Insular Possession*. John Morrison and his son were established interpreters by 1830. Both died in the 1840s. I have benefited from much useful information on these and other figures that appear in *An Insular Possession* provided in Frank Welsh's history of Hong Kong (Welsh, 1993).

³ Not a great deal is known about Nye. Austin Coates mentions him in his account of the riot of 1838 that occurred in a square in Canton (the incident is depicted in Chapter 25 of *An Insular Possession*). According to Coates, Nye averted a hostile and bloody disaster by succeeding in persuading a Hong merchant, Howqua, to send for the police to calm the situation (Coates, 1966: 180). Frank Welsh refers to Nye merely as an American resident and an 'old Canton hand' (Welsh, 1993: 180).

that '[l]ong before Harriet Low [a contemporary diarist] described him as "fascinatingly ugly" Chinnery seems to have come to a similar conclusion himself. His "ugliness" admittedly grew more apparent with the years; this is evident from the series of self-portraits he painted, sketched or executed in chalks and ink between his middle India years and his old age in Macau' (Hutcheon, 1974: 111). Like Chinnery, O'Rourke is born in 1774 and dies in 1853. George Chinnery was a popular character who arrived in Canton from Calcutta in an attempt to escape some large debts which he accumulated in India.¹ In his biographical sketch of Chinnery, G.B. Endacott records that he enjoyed fooling visitors to his abode by painting 'an oil-lamp on the door of his house which was so life-like that the Chinese tried to handle it' (Endacott, 1962: 146). In Chapter 36 Walter reports in his newspaper, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, that he has been similarly fooled by a door knocker which O'Rourke has painted on his door.² During his time in Macao in the 1830s, Chinnery made an acquaintance with a journalist, W.W. Wood, 'a young American who sketched and possibly studied under Chinnery at the time' (Hutcheon, 1974: 83). Wood was the first person to edit an English language newspaper in China, the *Canton Register*. Walter Eastman would seem to be modelled on this person. Eastman paints under the guidance of O'Rourke, and becomes editor of the *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, a newspaper that rivals the *Canton Register* whose editor remains anonymous until the appendices. Chinnery used to tease W.W. Wood for challenging his status as Macao's ugliest man as Wood had been 'pock-marked from an early age' (Hutcheon, 1974: 111). Similarly, Eastman is 'heavily marked by smallpox and part of the bottom wing of his right nostril has been destroyed by the same disease' (Mo, 1986: 12).

The intricate correspondences between fictional and real-life characters implicates the text quite closely with the production of representations of life in Canton, Macao and Hong Kong in the 1830s and 1840s. The novel addresses the epistemology of the time by fictionalising characters involved in various forms of textual production. Nye published a

¹ It is supposed that Chinnery left Ireland for Calcutta as a part of a business venture. According to Endacott, he was 'reasonably well off, and was connected with the merchant house of Chase, Sewell and Chinnery of Madras' (Endacott, 1962: 142). I am tempted to hazard that Gideon's surname might have been suggested by this historical connection between the names of Chinnery and Chase.

² Despite the many correspondences between Chinnery and O'Rourke, there are neat little differences also. For example, O'Rourke enjoys drinking alcohol, while Chinnery was strictly abstemious (Endacott, 1962: 144).

lecture that depicted life during these years, Chinnery was a painter of contemporary life 'going out at dawn to draw and paint' (Sullivan, 1973: 87),¹ and Wood was both a painter and journalist. The work of each could be consulted to gain a picture of what life was like for the Western community at the time of the colonisation of Hong Kong. I do not wish to collapse differences between each form of representation, for example by treating paintings strictly as historical documents. But the multiple forms of representations generated by such figures are connected by, in Foucault's terms, a *historical a priori* that constructs a common conceptual field. Indeed, Foucault argues that the archive thus defined only 'emerges in fragments, regions and levels' (Foucault, 1972: 130). Lectures, paintings and newspapers are different forms of representation, but are still connected to a common epistemology. That epistemology might be perpetuated if the novel's narrator was to write history in the fashion of Hayden White, trusting the validity of these different fragments or regions of representation. The archive requires an interrogation if the conditions of possibility are to be foregrounded and criticised. This is what is at stake in the transformation of Nye, Chinnery and Wood into Chase, O'Rourke and Eastman. The fictionalising of the central characters signals a *displacement* from the epistemology in the archive. This displacement, as I demonstrate, foregrounds the epistemological structure that influenced the production of representation *at a specific historical juncture*. That structure is displaced in part by parody, defined as 'repetition with a critical difference, which marks difference rather than similarity' (Hutcheon, 1985: 6). In *An Insular Possession*, a specific epistemology is repeated with a critical difference for the purposes of critique.

An impression can be made of the knowledge conventionally disseminated about the colonisation of Hong Kong in Nye's lecture. It depicts life in Canton in the 1830s as a mixture of excitement and danger. Due to Chinese law, only a strict number of merchants were allowed to set up trading on the banks of the Canton River for period of six months in every year. They were not permitted to enter the city of Canton, nor invite women to stay at the factories where

¹ A wide selection of Chinnery's work is included in Robin Hutcheon's biography of Chinnery (Hutcheon, 1974), that includes sketches and paintings. Chinnery's work is often reproduced in texts about Hong Kong (Coates, 1966) (Cameron, 1991), although he features rarely in accounts of nineteenth century painting. Jeremy Maas, however, does include Chinnery's painting *Dent's Veranda, Macao* in his book *Victorian Painters* (Maas, 1988: 117).

trade was conducted. For the remainder of the year they were required to withdraw to Macao. The hostility on the part of Western merchants at such confining arrangements was very much matched by the Chinese authorities. Many Western traders made lucrative profits importing opium, the influx of which the Chinese authorities angrily opposed. Tensions often erupted into violence. Nye's tale of Canton in the 1830s records these days as full of romance and adventure. As he explains to his audience,

The very name of China - the distant Cathay - was, at that day, pregnant with the Romance of History; and suggested imaginative dreams of

'That vast shore

Washed by the farthest sea':

so attractively portrayed by Shakespeare, as the goal of adventurous spirits.

(Nye, 1873: 4).

China is a 'heathen, mysterious land' (Nye, 1873: 4), and those Westerners stationed there seem lone examples of civilisation and righteousness struggling against the 'minds of ignorant millions' (Nye, 1873: 7). Their living conditions are those of 'Animals in the Zoological Gardens of London' (Nye, 1873: 15). For Nye, the growth of trade on the Chinese coast was the means by which such perceived ignorance was broken. The senior merchants - such as Jardine and Matheson - brought the rule of law to anarchic lands, establishing 'order and peace' (Nye, 1873: 24). The decline into war between Britain and China in 1839, and the possession of Hong Kong island in 1841 as a permanent trading port, seem justified by Nye's vocabulary. He praises the West for 'breaching the ponderous wall of exclusiveness, behind which China had hidden her weakness for centuries' (Nye, 1873: 25). After a lengthy narration of the hostilities which surrounded the possession of Hong Kong, which emphasises the gallantry of those Westerners caught up in battle, Nye concludes his lecture by pausing to reflect upon the differences between Canton in the 1830s and 1870s, in order 'that the measure of progress' (Nye, 1873: 68) made by those in the West in China can be grasped.

In a the context of nineteenth-century India, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued that archival documents of the East India Company produced by soldiers and administrators can be read as 'constructing the object of representations that becomes the reality of India' (Spivak, 1985: 129). Spivak's comments help establish the referent as both imagined and concrete. Her argument can be modified to understand the production of the referent in Nye's lecture. That is

to say, Nye's lecture constructs a representation of life in China which fashions reality in particular ways. Nye's narrative offers a legitimation of both capitalism and colonialism. The image of a benevolent West leading China out of her ignorance via the market-place testifies to Nye's view of the productive influence that Western trade had on Chinese culture. The image of reality Nye depicts justifies the colonisation of Hong Kong in 1842, and defends the right to trade by claiming benevolent consequences for the Chinese. The knowledge that Nye espouses in his lecture seems coterminous with colonialist epistemology. This epistemology functions as the novel's referent. *An Insular Possession* engages quite specifically with Western perspectives of the colonisation of Hong Kong housed in the archive in its attempt to articulate a critical history. Indeed, this is signalled by the novel's title which echoes a phrase credited to one of the most powerful traders based in Canton - James Matheson - that appeared in a letter that reached the British government on the 28th of July, 1831. The letter, sent by British merchants trading in the factories in Canton, urged Parliament to seize some territory close to the Canton river where trade could be conducted without recourse to the regulations laid down by the Chinese authorities:

Your Petitioners indulge a hope that the Government of Great Britain, with the sanction of the Legislature, will adopt a resolution worthy of a Nation, and, by the acquisition of *an insular possession* near the coast of China, place British Commerce in this remote quarter of the globe beyond the reach of future despotism and oppression. (cited in Welsh, 1993: 51 - emphasis added)

The novel displaces Western perspectives, typified by Nye's depiction of the reality of Hong Kong, in two ways. First, it foregrounds the extent to which representations are provisional, due to the assumptions of cultural difference that make artists and photographers consciously decide what to exclude from their representations. Second, and more importantly, the novel points to the material consequences of the epistemology supported by Nye's lecture. I shall explore each in turn.

A recognition of the epistemology that informs the production of perspectives occurs in the novel's attention to painting and photography. Walter Eastman and Harry O'Rourke are both keen painters. Throughout the early part of the novel we watch several painters at work. Like Alice Barclay Remington, the reader is educated about the conventions of artistic

production at the time. When Alice ascends the hill of Taipa island with Eastman to sketch Macao in Chapter 11, she remarks on his neglecting of a tree and his insertion instead of an imagined branch in his sketch. Eastman explains that this inclusion is 'a device, not exactly a convention, perhaps an accepted fiction, by which I may draw your eye in, making the scene complete and [...] somehow more outstanding' (Mo, 1986: 120). The imagination is always selecting from and adding to the actual. Art is revealed as provisional, tropological in White's sense, as it delivers crafted representations rather than faithful copies of the real. However, it is important to recognise the representations of Canton, Macao and Hong Kong are influenced by cultural conventions and prejudices against the Chinese. When O'Rourke joins the American staff of the Meridian Factory in a tour of the forbidden city of Canton in Chapter 6, we watch him 'on the alert for subjects' (Mo, 1986: 45) to paint amongst the Chinese population. Eventually choosing a young mother as a subject for a picture, O'Rourke instigates a process of selection by refusing to paint the baby she is carrying in a sling on her back. We recognize his 'ruthless eye, which eliminates what it does not want to have' (Mo, 1986: 40-41). The Chinese are often left out of the paintings of Eastman and O'Rourke. In Chapter 15, Eastman's depiction of a Chinese coolie killed by a snake in the Factories' square eliminates the mass of Chinese who gather around the corpse. Gideon is alarmed at this omission, as is evidenced by his words to Eastman as he sits patiently sketching the swollen corpse:

'The spectators, Walter, where are they?' [asks Gideon.]
 'I omit them' [replies Eastman.]
 'Why?'
 'Because I choose so to do.'
 'But they are part of a story, perhaps the biggest part.'
 'I do not tell a story.' (Mo, 1986: 162)

At one level, this moment seems appropriately postmodern. Our attention is directed to those things left outside of the artist's frame. This, by implication, begs the recognition that all representation is selective. But more specifically, Eastman's elimination of the Chinese betrays certain cultural prejudices towards the Chinese. In this scene, only a dead Chinese is fit for art, and the living audience is expendable. Eastman does not feel compelled to include them in his representation, and believes he is not responsible for representing events in a way that bears witness to their role in events. Eastman and O'Rourke often expend with representing Chinese

subjects, as if they are purely marginal to the scenes depicted. The Chinese are either left out of the picture completely or severely altered in their representation, as evidenced by O'Rourke's painting of the Chinese baby mentioned previously. We might recognise some of the prejudices that affect representations from the time in the episode where Eastman takes his first daguerreotype, a group shot of *Nemesis's* crew with the Meridian staff at Veale's aviary in Macao. At first it appears as if he is successful in capturing perfect representation as, in Captain Hall's view, he manages to depict the men 'most faithful to life' (Mo 1986: 467). However, Walter pronounces the picture as ruined, much to Gideon's surprise:

Gideon examines the composition. And there, at the very back, in the doorway of the verandah, where bright sunlight makes the image especially vivid, though smaller than the arranged officers and the gentlemen, is the (grinning) Ah Cheong. Pinching his nose, on the way to the roses, he holds aloft a ... chamber-pot! (Mo, 1986: 467)

It is interesting to conjecture what upsets Eastman. It might be the fact that a chamber-pot appears in the photograph, disturbing the gentility of the depicted gathering by reminding its viewers of certain necessary bodily functions. But in the light of the elimination of the Chinese from paintings, it is more likely that Eastman is affronted by the appearance of Ah Cheong, O'Rourke's Chinese servant. The picture is spoiled by the inclusion of a Chinese. Art may well be provisional and partial, but *An Insular Possession* demonstrates how the selection of materials deemed fit for representation is due to conscious decisions predicated upon conceptions of cultural superiority. These assumptions are particularly visible in the derogation of the Chinese art. During a discussion of Alice's sketch of a Macao pavilion, Eastman comments upon the different stylistic methods employed by Western and Chinese cultures when representing the same phenomena:

'For instance, allow me to explain to you the laws of perspective. Now one of the differences, the main difference, between a painting by a native and one by a foreign hand, is that the one completed by the former will appear to be flat and unnatural. It may be of persons or of the craggy landscapes they are so fond of putting upon their scrolls and fans.' (Mo, 1986: 113)

Perspective is not naturally or faithfully conveyed by the artist; it has its own laws which must be explained, learned and perpetuated. From a Western perspective, Chinese artistic

conventions render any native representations of China as 'unnatural'.¹ The implication of this quotation is that a natural perspective cannot exist. Natural perspective is, ironically, the product of conventions. But in this epistemology, Western conventions are deemed superior to the those of Chinese art, as they produce more faithfully a living scenario. As Chinese art does not obey the received laws, Eastman dismisses it as of poor quality.

Similar prejudices occur with the photographs Eastman makes of incidents that occur in the novel. Photography, it might be assumed, is a more reliable form of representation because, as Roland Barthes argues in *Camera Lucida*, the photograph has a distinct relationship with the referent. Barthes proposes that the photograph 'always carries its referent within itself' (Barthes, 1981: 5). In his description of a photograph of a slave market, he concludes that photographs always establish 'a certainty that such a thing had existed: not a question of exactitude, but of reality: the historian was no longer the mediator, slavery was given without meditation, the fact was established without method' (Barthes, 1981: 86). This makes the existence of the past 'as certain as the present' (Barthes, 1981: 88) as 'the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation' (Barthes, 1981: 89). James E. Young argues for the documentary value of photographs in his assertion that 'as a seeming trace or fragment of its referent that appeals to the eye for its proof, the photograph is able to invoke the authority of its empirical link to events, which in turn seems to reinforce the sense of its own unmediated factuality' (Young, 1988: 208). But, as is demonstrated in the novel, the documentary propensity of photography is not immune from the same kinds of troping that affect the production of art. Eastman is never entirely comfortable with his recognition that '[o]ne's point of view is, after all, a matter of perspective' (Mo, 1986: 185). He seizes upon the invention of the camera with relish, regarding it as an antidote to the prejudices of the painter. At one point, anticipating Flaubert's delineation in his *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, he pronounces that it shall 'make the painter extinct' (Mo, 1986: 455) as the camera can capture 'perfect representation' (Mo, 1986: 455). Yet Walter's

¹ Eastman's attitude is coterminous with responses to Chinese art recorded at the time. Michael Sullivan quotes a passage by a European writer in Macao, Toogood Downing. Writing in 1835, Downing refers to the ink paintings of landscapes produced by the Chinese literati. As Sullivan summarises, 'Downing, as we would expect, remarks that these very, very old landscapes are very defective by reason of their total lack of perspective, shading and chiaroscuro; but he did notice them, and even comments on their freedom, and on the high regard in which they were held by the Chinese themselves. This must certainly be the first time in the confrontation of Eastern and Western art that any European writer even mentioned the only kind of painting that the Chinese intelligentsia took seriously' (Sullivan, 1973: 89).

attempts at photography do little to guarantee reliable representation, and the reader is made aware of the craft that is involved in producing photographic images. During the assault on the Bogue forts, Walter is irritated that he cannot take a picture of the scene as 'there is no way in which his exposure time can be sufficiently shortened to cope with these fast and violent events' (Mo, 1986: 499-500). In order to take a photograph, he finds a dead Chinese artilleryman, whom he and Wheeldon drape over the breech of a cannon:

Walter kicks at a ruptured sand-bag to bring more debris down. Pulling at some wicker baskets filled with earth, he completes the scene of destruction. Wheeldon brings a tasselled lance from where it has been flung down by escaping soldiers, another pleasant touch. Walter now addresses himself to the management of the camera, he, Wheeldon, and it the only standing whole objects in the devastation.

'A little further back, Lieutenant Wheeldon [commands Walter], I'll have the liberty of requesting and, pray, unsheath your sword again. Yes, arm to the side. Handsomely. Now, if you'll stand still as the dead man. Fine.' (Mo, 1986: 501-502)

As well as crafting a representation that will seemingly document the assault on the Bogue forts, Eastman's arrangement of the scene perpetuates the symbolic resources of Empire. Wheeldon, with sword unsheathed, will appear as the heroic victor of the battle, with his vanquished Chinese foe next to him. The implication of Eastman's photographs with colonial power is accentuated by the fact that, for the Chinese who survive the assault on the forts, 'the brass lens has all the appearance of the barrel of a new and still deadlier weapon (which perhaps it is)' (Mo, 1986: 499). The novel affirms Joel Snyder's and Neil Walsh Allen's view that the photographic image 'is simply not a property which things naturally possess in addition to possessing size and weight. The image is a crafted, not a natural thing' (Snyder and Allen, 1975: 149). But it does so by recognising how the crafted image is part of the weaponry of colonialism due to the images of valour it purports to document.

Let us move now to consider the material effects of the colonial epistemology I have traced through the production of art and photography in the novel. As Elaine Yee Lin Ho argues, the conflict between the *Canton Monitor* and the *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, to which Gideon and Eastman contribute, dramatises the conflicting attitudes to the trade in opium that was the cause of so much tension between the British and Chinese in the 1830s. The *Canton Monitor* is a mouth-piece for much British imperialist rhetoric. It supports the opium

trade and delights in asserting the cultural superiority of the British at every possible opportunity. It has little regard for the Chinese. Early in 1834 it asserts the right to Free Trade to the extent that '[i]f the high road to Free Trade and riches in China may be reached through a river of blood, then let that blood be Chinese' (Mo, 1986: 38). The trade in opium is defended as speculation worthy of 'a body of most respectable and established capitalists' (Mo, 1986: 96). The *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee* counterpoints the opinions expressed in the *Canton Monitor*. Eastman and Gideon write numerous articles that represent their views concerning the trade in 'unadulterated poison' (Mo, 1986: 14). As Ho argues, the newspapers 'are clearly shown to be embedded in the socio-cultural and ideological situation of those who produce them and to put strikingly different constructions upon events' (Ho, 1994: 55). The conflict articulates a debate through which we might recognise the range of cultural values that helped shaped events at the time. The *Canton Monitor* puts much pressure upon the various representatives of the British government, like Charles Elliott, if they are seen to be too lenient towards the Chinese. To choose one of many possible examples, when Elliott arrives in Canton in March 1839 in an attempt to placate Commissioner Lin who has confined the British merchants to their Factories, the *Canton Monitor* applauds his bravery in joining the besieged workers. Yet his 'spirit of conciliation' (Mo, 1986: 367) with the Chinese is questioned frequently. Although at one level the *Canton Monitor* and the *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee* seem opposed, at another level many of the cultural assumptions espoused by the *Canton Monitor* are perpetuated by its rival. The efficacy of an epistemology common to each is demonstrated by the difficulties faced by Gideon in his attempts to produce knowledge about the Chinese. Gideon's quest to engage productively with Chinese culture and break down cultural prejudices is disqualified by the position his knowledge occupies in the dominant system of enunciability. I will consider Gideon's role both as a journalist and a translator.

Like Nye, Gideon Chase performs the role of producing knowledge about China in the 1830s and 1840s. Both are pedagogues. However, Gideon Chase wishes to explore Chinese culture. He does not assume, like Nye, that China is a place of barbarism. Chase is initially presented as a young, somewhat idealistic figure who keenly believes that the family of man can perfect itself and transcend racial and cultural barriers through the perfect comprehension of

other cultures. He displays a compassion for the Chinese that is rare amongst his colleagues. When the Meridian staff are attacked in Canton and forced to flee, Ridley cracks his stick on the head of a coolie, injuring the Chinese. Safely back at the Factories, most of the party are keen to relate their daring to their colleagues. Gideon's reaction is significantly different:

As it is hardly a unique experience, even [O'Rourke] has difficulty in holding the attention of the young gentlemen who find a new topic in the grand dinner the Company are giving on New Year's Eve to celebrate their passing. So when Gideon enquires hesitantly, 'what became, I wonder, of the fellow Ridley struck?', no one hears him, and Eastman shrugs his shoulders. (Mo, 1986: 50)

Gideon's attitude affords the Chinese some visibility in the novel. Whereas Walter was dismayed at the inclusion of Ah Cheong in his photograph, Gideon is keen to encapsulate the Chinese in representation. When aboard the brothel in Chapter 15, Gideon is more interested in the possible 'fascinating history' (Mo, 1986: 176) of the pimp Woo Sang than in the lusty escapades of Ridley and O'Rourke. Gideon wishes to establish 'a perfect correspondence' (Mo, 1986: 64) between Western and Chinese cultures where both parties become acceptable to each other as equals. He believes this would help calm the tense relations between the British and Chinese authorities. As he implores Walter, '[d]o you think Sir George would not laugh at Munqua's or Howqua's ridiculous speech? The weightiest matters become things laughable in their mouths. And so it is with them' (Mo, 1986: 64). Defending his views to Eastman, he argues that if a Westerner could imagine what it is to be Chinese then 'you would no longer hate him' (Mo, 1986: 83). Eastman argues that such an attempt could threaten Gideon's cultural identity, stripping him of his culture and rendering him 'naked, shivering, lost, and, my boy, quite alone and removed' (Mo, 1986: 84). Eastman's warning is important. For Gideon to produce a benevolent knowledge of the Chinese he must write against the grain of the dominant cultural values from which he is not immune. Father Ribiero urges Gideon that he must forget his own cultural background when learning Chinese and become a 'blank sheet on which will be inscribed the accumulated literary wisdom of a passage of whole centuries' (Mo, 1986: 122). But the novel shows that, due to the system of enunciability dominant at this historical juncture, little space can be opened where the form of knowledge Gideon wishes to construct can be accommodated.

Gideon's articles are intended to render Chinese culture less peculiar and more accessible to English speakers. His task, however, has affinities with Orientalism in its attempt to explain certain perceived strangenesses. As Edward Said argues, typical Orientalist strategies create the Orient as

something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks. (Said, 1978: 40)

Gideon's knowledge would wish to challenge the dominant epistemological frameworks, exemplified by Nye's lecture, that influence the representation of the Chinese. But, as his articles demonstrate, he struggles to dismantle those frameworks. Gideon's articles appear regularly in the *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*. Their form recalls the brief essay that was popular during the nineteenth century. In his article concerning the conduct of the Chinese when seeing a person drowning, entitled 'On the apparent inhumanity of the Chinese' (Mo, 1986: 293), Gideon struggles to set aside his own cultural values. He starts his piece by asserting that all men contain essentially the same nature whether they possess 'an integument which is yellow, black, red, white, coffee, or any combination of known fleshy tints' (Mo, 1986: 293). But in his description of the refusal of the Chinese to rescue drowning men, he judges this as a 'callousness' (Mo, 1986: 293) and concludes by opining that 'life is strange and holds out some perverted instances' (Mo, 1986: 294). Gideon is unable both to translate the behaviour of the Chinese into familiar, comprehensible terms which overcome their perceived strangeness, and move beyond his cultural prejudices to take an alternative moral perspective on what he sees. In the same piece he mentions a Chinese who receives the story of the Good Samaritan with 'mirth and disbelief' (Mo, 1986: 294). At one point he writes about the ways the Chinese conceive of distance by 'the degree of effort or labour' it takes to travel between two points. A journey uphill will be perceived to be further than the same journey downhill. Gideon calls this 'bizarre reasoning' (Mo, 1986: 363). He eventually comes to lament in his piece 'Through a glass darkly' that the Bible cannot be translated into Chinese without a complete transformation of 'if not its matter, its effect' (Mo, 1986: 450). In his essay 'On the natives' intolerance of lying' Gideon explores how the Chinese do not conceive of lying with the same moral indignation as

Westerners, concluding that '[i]f they cannot distinguish truths from falsehoods, how may they be expected to receive greater truths?' (Mo, 1986: 446). This is one way that the Chinese have agency in the novel. They function as Bhabha's mimic men, menacing the authority of the colonisers by displacing their knowledge. This predicates a crisis for Gideon. His quest for productive knowledge of the Chinese folds back on itself and subverts his own cultural values. Yet, despite a sympathetic engagement with Chinese culture, Gideon has difficulty in dislodging the dominant assumptions which, as demonstrated in the art and photography of Eastman and O'Rourke, shape the representations that can be produced. The novel forges links between the prejudices embedded in both art and language when Eastman informs Gideon that O'Rourke defines art as a discipline to be learned in precisely the same way as language is acquired:

He says that the means a painter may employ he must take from his predecessors, such as a child learning a language, which he did not invent. At first he lisps childish things, then his syntax, his lexicon of words, become those of an adult, and he may speak naturally of his own sentences and ideas without a thought for grammar and construction. (Mo, 1986: 114).

The connection forged between painting and language calls attention to the cultural specificity of representation. As Gideon's experience as a translator demonstrates, languages carry with them a complex set of cultural values that make them difficult to translate into other linguistic systems. It is impossible for him to reject totally the cultural values embedded in the language he speaks.

The problems with Gideon's attempt to acquire knowledge about Chinese culture are increased by the ways in which his acquired learning functions as a form of knowledge that increases antagonism between the Chinese and the British. It was illegal for Westerners to learn Chinese during the period and, as Austin Coates explains, the presence of Western interpreters altered relations between China and the Empire. Normally, any correspondence from Western figures to the Chinese mandarins was sent via the Hong merchants, who changed the tone of any address accordingly to suit Chinese conventions of protocol in their translations. The presence of interpreters complicated matters, because '[f]or the first time, with English interpreters present, the mandarins heard outspoken criticism instead of watered-down pleas. It

was an unpleasant experience all round' (Coates, 1966: 115). Interpreters were a particular target for mandarin resentment, pronounced as 'barbarians of particular villainousness' (Coates, 1966: 116). Gideon's knowledge makes him useful to the British forces and dangerous to the Chinese. When Gideon joins the excursion to the brothel in Chapter 15, he is watched by a group of Chinese who recognize him as a significantly 'dangerous Stripling Who Knows Talk' (Mo, 1986: 169). Ah Sam considers Gideon as a 'dangerous fellow [...] Hadn't he listened to the workmen wondering who sodomised whom, and then the fellow had asked for a cup of tea in a perfect Tung Kwun accent' (Mo, 1986: 454). When a bounty is announced for the death of Captain Elliott and his colleagues in Chapter 36, Gideon is included on the list. One of Gideon's first tasks as an official interpreter to Captain Elliott is to translate a communication from Keshen to Elliott regarding the opium trade at Canton. Keshen informs Elliott that 'the barbarian ships may as customary report to Canton to conduct their trade' (Mo, 1986: 468). At first glance, this would appear to be acceptable to the traders. Yet, in Gideon's gloss of this letter, he argues that the correspondence is 'unsatisfactory in the extreme' (Mo, 1986: 468) as it addresses Elliott as nothing more than a barbarian, and is written in a desultory tone. When Gideon joins the *Nemesis*, his knowledge of Chinese culture is used for destructive purposes. When Captain Hall instructs Mr. Crouch to fire at the Bogue forts, Gideon's knowledge of the Chinese army renders an otherwise invisible division of specialised troops visible for Captain Hall, who changes his tactics when faced with this new knowledge:

'Grape-shot, if you will, Mr. Crouch.'

Gideon recognises the banners waved in the entrenchments. 'These are Manchu troops,' he informs Captain Hall. 'Tartars,' he adds as Captain Hall shows no sign of recognition. 'Their bravest troops.'

'Canister on top of the grape, Mr. Crouch.' (Mo, 1986: 473)

Gideon's recognitions are taking place in an epistemology that transforms his knowledge, intended for benign purposes, into weaponry. His knowledge paradoxically becomes of use to those that subscribe to derogatory views of the Chinese, and is recuperated by the British for the purposes of colonial aggression. He struggles to find a space where it might be used for the purposes he intends. To Gideon's dismay he realises the destructive ends his knowledge serves. This is evident in Chapter 39 as Gideon watches the assault on Canton from the safety of the

Rattlesnake:

Explosions twinkle as shells from the ships in the river fall upon the suburbs in the dusk. The surgeon of the transport is in the other mast. He appears to be sketching. The man nods in a friendly way to Gideon, but the young American ignores him - an uncharacteristic piece of rudeness [...]

That I have contributed to this, thinks Gideon bitterly. He could fling himself 50 feet down into the water with shame and vexation. He feels lost and confused in the immediate sense, as well. (Mo, 1986: 540)

I suggest that the appearance of the sketching surgeon in this quotation adds another meaning to Gideon's thoughts. Gideon's translations have made possible both the battle that rages before him, and seem to have done little to affect significantly the production of representation. Gideon has failed to produce a form of knowledge that runs against the grain, challenging the perpetuation of dominant representations of Western superiority and might. Recalling Foucault's vocabulary, Gideon's complicity with that he opposes reveals the 'enunciative possibilities and impossibilities' (Foucault, 1972: 129) sanctioned by the episteme within which he produces knowledge. It is impossible for Gideon to produce the benign knowledge he intends because it is recuperable within the system of enunciability within which statements become meaningful in particular ways. The disparagement of the Chinese has not been dislodged, despite Gideon's intentions, but advanced.

I suggest that the fracture between Gideon's ambitions - the production of a non-prejudiced view of the Chinese - and the recuperation of his knowledge marks a displacing of the cultural values typified in Gideon Nye's lecture. In *An Insular Possession*, the dominant system of enunciability is foregrounded by calling attention to the ways it gives meaning to the statements that are made within it. Gideon's knowledge is valuable only for the purposes of war, rather than cross-cultural communication. The system cannot facilitate a space where China and the West meet on the terms Gideon wishes. In so doing, the system that legitimated the dominant cultural values is foregrounded as a material agent of history, linking such modes as art, photography and journalism to the colonial possession of Hong Kong. The system of enunciability I have explored is the material referent of *An Insular Possession*. The novel ultimately supports LaCapra's point that the historical archive has agency over the historian. It suggests that a critical history must recognise and confront the system of enunciability that

structures the statements in the archive, if it is effectively to take 'a knife to its roots' (Nietzsche, 1983: 76) and produce a critical impression of the past. *An Insular Possession* makes visible the system of enunciability that is housed in the archive, rather than perpetuate its values. Hutcheon's description of parody in twentieth-century art forms is appropriate to the novel. In *An Insular Possession* 'critical distance is implied between the background text being parodied and the new incorporating work' (Hutcheon, 1985: 32). Parody suggests its dependence upon and resistance towards existing documentary sources. The novel engages the reader in a specific referent that it seeks to displace. Ho's argument, then, that the novel complicates the border between fact and fiction is rather trite. The novel's critical agenda disqualifies it from the chora of postmodernist novels about which she writes, as it does not aim to make the referent undecidable. The referent is not in any doubt; rather it is the knowledge about the referent produced at the time which is placed under suspicion as faithful or true. Indeed, the intimate relationship between the archive and the novel betrays an attempt not to render the referent completely indeterminate. This can be identified as postcolonial impulse to resist relinquishing the referent completely. In terms of the debate concerning the suitability of postmodern aesthetics for postcolonial critical practices, *An Insular Possession* seems to indicate that there can be a productive relationship between the two. However, that relationship has its limitations. By displacing the specific epistemology operative at the time the novel is set, the text disrupts the representations made by non-Chinese for the purposes of critique. But, it offers little space where the perspectives of the Chinese are made available. Those such as Ah Cheong, whose chamber-pot upsets Eastman's photograph of the *Nemesis's* crew, do not produce their version of history in *An Insular Possession*. The novel's focus is limited to the dynamics of a colonial discourse. As its fascinating reliance upon the very documents it contests suggests, *An Insular Possession* repeats critically the system of enunciability housed in the archive in order to displace its claim to represent faithfully life at the time of the colonisation of Hong Kong. The novel certainly demonstrates how specific representations of Chinese culture - sympathetic or otherwise - served to support a dominant epistemology. But the voices of those colonised remain silent. They are glimpsed as aberrations that spoil representation, such as Ah Cheong in Eastman's daguerrotype, or faintly defined mimic men

that complicate Western epistemology. Postmodernism, it seems, is suited best to corrupting from within the discourses used by those in positions of power. It is less able to facilitate the discourses of those marginalised, who remain at the edges of this novel's representation of the colonisation of Hong Kong.

The Redundancy of Courage: Communication, control and critique

The Redundancy of Courage examines a contemporary colonial conflict. It represents that conflict from the perspective of one who has been subject to the power of a colonial invader. This novel shifts the focus from the coloniser to the colonised, and highlights the problems posed by postmodernism concerning the construction of a critical history. It engages with different postmodernist modes of representation than those encountered in *An Insular Possession*, but develops its sense of the limitations of postmodernism. This is in part due to the novel's contemporary context. The system of enunciability that is foregrounded in this novel is the product of the technologies of the late twentieth century. *The Redundancy of Courage* analyses the importance of communication networks for contemporary colonial disputes, particularly the ways in which power is grasped through media communications by the colonising power, and the problems this poses for the process of contesting colonialism. This aspect of the novel can be approached through an observation made by Umberto Eco in his essay 'Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare'. Eco observes that effective political power today resides with those who control communications:

Not long ago, if you wanted to seize political power in a country, you had merely to control the army and police. Today it is only in the most backward countries that fascist generals, in carrying out a *coup d'état*, still use tanks. If a country has reached a high level of industrialisation the whole scene changes. The day after the fall of Krushchev, the editors of *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, the heads of radio and television were replaced; the army wasn't called out. Today a country belongs to the person who controls communication. (Eco, 1986: 135)

Eco's words depict a scenario that is explored in detail in *The Redundancy of Courage*. Its narrator, Adolph Ng, is faced with the task of writing a critical history of a recently colonised island, Danu, for an audience - to borrow Jameson's term - grown accustomed to approaching history as mere simulacra. In his quest to make visible the sufferings of a colonised country to a specifically Western audience, Ng is forced to engage with the production of simulacra that, on

occasions, he bitterly resents. Ng is left with little alternative but to engage with systems of representation that can be defined as postmodernist in an attempt to make the plight of the Danuese visible to the outside world. The limited success of his narrative I read as betraying a pessimism concerning the usefulness of postmodernism.

The Redundancy of Courage is based upon the Indonesian occupation of East Timor which began on 7th of December, 1975. Danu, the fictional setting for most of the novel, is situated near the Australian coast in roughly the same position as East Timor. Like East Timor, Danu was once a Portuguese colony. When Danu is similarly invaded on 'the 7th of December' (Mo, 1991: 3), it is by the army of an unidentified nation called the *malais* (literally 'foreigners') who 'owned the Western portion of the island' (Mo, 1991: 29), just as Indonesia possesses West Timor. The name of the Danuese resistance movement is FAKOUM, an acronym 'of which the first word was Frente (Front) and the last Mundo (world)' (Mo, 1991: 69). The acronym resembles East Timor's resistance movement FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionaria do Timor Leste Independente). FAKOUM's leadership of Arsenio, Osvaldo and especially Martinho reflect FRETILIN's governing council who, as Caldwell and Utrecht note, were at the time of the Indonesian occupation 'Catholics, and a number of them regular church goers' (Caldwell and Utrecht, 1979: 173).¹

The narrator, Adolph Ng, is a Chinese hotelier educated at university in Canada. His Western education is a vital fact that influences his narrative. As he admits early in the novel:

I am a man of the modern world. The world of television, of universities, of advertising, of instant communication, made me what I am. It made me a citizen of the great world and it made me a misfit forever. I was offered the glorious things of that great realm, and when I was tempted and said: yes, give them to me, I was thrown down and when I awoke I was abandoned and lay in a desolate place, yea, and the air was full of the sound of wailing and the gnashing of teeth. (Mo, 1991: 24)

Central here is Ng's equation of the 'modern world' with 'instant communication'. His experiences in Toronto acquainted him with the importance of images and style in the day to day lives of his fellow students. His account of life at university draws attention to the influence of style and image on the student population, particularly as regards history. Ng

¹ A most useful account of the early years of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor can be found in Caldwell and Utrecht, *Indonesia: An Alternative History*. See particularly chapter 11, 'Aggression in East Timor and Recent Developments' (Caldwell and Utrecht, 1979: 169-192).

joined the university's China society as a student. He remembers that many of his fellow members snubbed him as 'the wrong kind of Chinese' (Mo, 1991: 26) because he didn't fit a received image:

At that time the Mao badge, the blue tunic, that red plastic book were all the rage. There was a group, of young Canadians, who aped all that, dressed the part and, for all I knew, ate rice out of enamel dishes. It was too absurd. I expect they are investment bankers now; no, in advertising. It was style they were interested in, after all. (Mo, 1991: 27)

Ng importantly calls attention to the allegiances of the students to historical personages like Mao that are expressed primarily in terms of style, such as clothing. Received images of communist China seemed more important to the students than its political ideology. The anecdote calls attention to the impact of obsession with style and image on the perception of history by those specifically in the West. This scenario configures the relationship between history and representation in terms familiar to theories of postmodernism. As I stated in my introduction, Jameson's delineation of postmodernism asserts that the prevalence of simulacra has threatened the referentiality of historical texts.¹ For Jameson, this aspect of postmodernism can be most clearly noticed in 'nostalgia films'. These films 'approach the 'past' through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image, and '1930s-ness' or '1950s-ness' by the attributes of fashion' (Jameson, 1991: 19). Jameson's comment can be modified to describe the students' perception of communist China primarily in terms of style. That is, students approach twentieth-century historical figures primarily as fashions and images, and use them as attributes of their own self-fashioning by dressing in a similar manner. History becomes primarily simulacra as the images of historical figures become of central importance, rather than the ideologies or values they espouse. Ng too falls foul of this process, and is influenced by such images. On leaving University he comments upon his Hair and Che Guevara posters which adorned his walls; he too was not 'immune from the times' (Mo, 1991: 28). The reference to these posters - one of a popular musical, the other of an Argentinian revolutionary - seems to place them on a par with each other. Both are popular, infinitely reproducible images that the students can possess in order to construct for themselves a

¹ I have in mind specifically Jameson's theory of postmodernism throughout my reading of *The Redundancy of Courage*.

particular kind of radical identity. Ng's experience provides an acute understanding of the dominant perception of history in the West, and influences his choice of language when recounting the events he has experienced in Danu.

Ng's experiences at university alter permanently his perception of the world. When he returns to Danu, he sees it as a 'small, broken-down settlement at the back of beyond' (Mo, 1991: 28) where 'there was no place for me in the simple community to which I returned' (Mo, 1991: 29). Yet Danu, however marginal it is perceived, seems more attuned to political issues, and its inhabitants display little of the vacuity of those at Toronto. While spending much time at the Praca, Ng becomes involved with the nucleus of FAKOUM and the IP (Independence Party) - including Osvaldo, Martinho, and others - who often hotly debate international politics. Ng notes that they were all 'far better acquainted with what was happening around the globe than, say, their acquaintances in Denver Colorado' (Mo, 1991: 34). The hollowness of those in the West is compellingly highlighted in Part Two, when Ng and Martinho argue fiercely about the ethics of Osvaldo's decision to fire upon some Danuese used by the *malais* as a human shield:

Gone were the Toronto days of disinterested, academic argument without heat, when you could magnanimously and cheerfully admit your opponent was correct and you were wrong; when it was a pleasure to allow yourself to be ensnared by the other party's dialectic. This was for real. (Mo, 1991: 226)

The implication here is that the Western universities are places of intellectual activity where debates have no significant material consequences. Ng's experiences in Canada enable him to understand extremely well the power and importance of images and style to Western citizens, and his narrative often focuses upon the importance of presenting the correct images of Danu to the West that consolidates the *malais'* power. But furthermore, as I argue in a moment, this also affects the narrative strategies Ng uses to make visible the colonisation of Danu to the audience implied by his narrative, chiefly the English-speaking Western world. Life may seem more 'real' in Danu, but difficulties arise in communicating that reality to an English-speaking audience.

The West's seduction by stylish images has a direct effect upon the fate of the colonised Danuese. As Ng argues, the comprehension of the war through media images in the West

causes their fortunes to be 'determined not by ourselves' (Mo, 1991: 110). If the outside world is presented with images of colonised Danu that seem to legitimate the *malais* occupation, then resistance on the part of the Danuese will gain little support. The realisation that '*if it doesn't get on TV in the West, it hasn't happened*' (Mo, 1991: 91) has enormous consequences for the nature of the *malais*' occupation. The *malais* realise that their occupation must be carefully communicated:

International opinion had to be assuaged, the Americans cultivated [...] It was a matter of lodging a sense of mission or even resentment in the consciousness of that great American television audience who comprise the Circus of our day: thumbs up or thumbs down. (Mo, 1991: 110)

Put simply, Danu is tethered to the West. It is doubly colonised; by the *malais* and by Western perceptions of Danu's reality. With the representation of the war to the Americans so crucial, the *malais* check the flow of information to and from Danu, and construct carefully crafted images of Danuese life under occupation. Indeed, they spend the first days of their occupation seizing the means of communication. Ng's first sight of the dreaded *malai* Cherry Berets is outside the Marconi centre, where the FAKOUM leader, Arsenio, is attempting to send a mayday to the outside world. The centre is an early and crucial target for the *malais*, and its capture reflects Eco's comments about the necessity of first controlling communications in contemporary power struggles. An Australian crew of television journalists, hired by FAKOUM, are caught in Balibo when the occupation is launched, and are killed by *malai* troops who claim them as victims of 'misdirected bullets' (Mo, 1991: 93), a view contested by Ng who suggests that they are systematically murdered. Bill Mabelleley, an Australian journalist, is described as the '*pièce de résistance*' (Mo, 1991: 21) of those captured by the *malais*. The incident highlights the importance of legislating and controlling the information about Danu that is disseminated throughout the outside world. Propoganda is used as much as terror to intimidate FAKOUM supporters and its military wing, FAKINTIL. Prior to the invasion Radio Malai causes a panic in Danu by falsely proclaiming the invasion has begun, forcing Arsenio to take to the streets with a loud-hailer to calm the population. After Martinho is captured, the *malais* drop leaflets on the mountain containing a message from him urging FAKINTIL to surrender and to join him in a life of luxurious servitude to their enemy.

Perhaps the best example of the way the *malais* manufacture images occurs in the third part of the novel, when Ng works as a servant to Colonel and Mrs Goreng. Ng learns that the *malais* have arranged for the visit of Western journalists, and the Gorengs would like Ng to talk to the journalists as a representative of the Danu people. Ng must present colonised Danu favourably, or suffer the consequences. He records that the event will represent the Danuese as happy with the *malais'* occupation, and thus will be

an extended press conference on the grand scale! They'd answer the outside world by giving them their own authorised version of the intervening years [of conflict]. They intended to make a prophecy that would be self-fulfilling in its entirety. By saying the war was over, the territory pacified, they would make it so. It wasn't just hot air - it was a blow against FAKINTIL that was as deadly in its way as a Bronco strike. What they had in common would become irrefutable, objective verity, the stock-in-trade of general knowledge for the educated and interested (few enough in all conscience) of the metropolises of the West. (Mo, 1991: 339)

This passage is notable for several reasons. First, Ng points out how the representation of a *malais* victory will constitute an historical event itself through the production of a media image. By making it seem that the FAKINTIL resistance has ended, FAKINTIL's cause will be damaged. Historical agency resides primarily with those who control communications. Second, that the image of a pacified Danu would be as effective as an air strike by a Bronco makes communications visible as a form of weaponry. This recalls the representation of Eastman's camera as a weapon in *An Insular Possession*. Third, the importance attached to audience of the Western metropolises emphasises the extent to which power ultimately resides in those locations where the simulcra of images are most prominent. Mrs Goreng spends two months preparing for the visit of Western journalists. The day after their arrival 'they got a full-scale historical briefing on Danu [...] Mrs Goreng was able to make it sound quite romantic - good copy for the female journo from the up-market US ladies' magazine' (Mo, 1991: 341). The effectiveness of these images is compellingly underlined in the novel's final chapter. It features a letter from one of Ng's university friends, Ann Laval, responding to the news that Ng has been caught up in the fighting in Danu. Her words seem to reveal the success of Mrs Goreng's invitation to the journalists :

I would always make sure I read the foreign page to see what was happening in Danu. The articles were quite big at first, then got smaller until they were

maybe only one or two paragraphs long, then they stopped at all. It must have been scary for you. You said you'd got caught up in the fighting, my husband Michael said he'd love to hear more about that. [...] [I]t must have been a very bad time. You must be glad the terrorists have gone away, even if it was at a terrible cost to your country. When I first met him Michael already belonged to the Unification Church and I do as well now, so we are aware of the threat from Communism in all its forms. (Mo, 1991: 400)

The efficacy of the *malais'* production of images on moulding popular opinion in the West is revealed in Ann's casual remarks. Ann's husband, Michael, treats Ng's experience of warfare as potentially entertaining. FAKINTIL are automatically dismissed as terrorists who have posed a communist threat, but have now ceased to exist. Ann's letter echoes much that was discussed during the journalists' visit arranged by Mrs Goreng. Her knowledge that there was a terrible cost to the defeat of the 'terrorists' echoes Ng's careful answer to one visiting journalist that 'the cost has been high' (Mo, 1991: 341) of integrating Danu. Additionally, Ann's view that the communists have now 'gone away' confirms Ng's worst fears about the extent to which the representation of the domestication of Danu by the *malais* will be believed by the outside world, and continued as a consequence.

It is not enough for Ng to satirise those residing in the West as glibly seduced by the latest glossy image or fad, as he does in descriptions of his days at university. Ann Laval's letter testifies that real change can happen in Danu if the perception of events can be changed in the West. The realisation that *malai* rule heavily depends upon the cultivation of international opinion, primarily through the control of information about Danu that reaches the West, motivates Ng's own text. His narrative is an attempt to bear witness to the sufferings of the Danuese under the rule of the *malais* in order to alert the West to the fact that alternative versions of events exist in contrast to the propaganda of the *malais*. Ng passionately argues that the discussions about Danu produced for the media are not to be trusted. The particular packaging of opinion that occurred at the time of Danu's colonisation leads Ng to assert that the reality of Danu is not commensurate with the language that claims to bear witness to it:

The Danuese had the right to self-determination, and the government they chose was FAKOUM. To say they wanted the *malais* or the *malais'* puppet was fantastical! The assertion bore no relation to what was happening in the real world. [...] The world doesn't see what actually happened. It merely hears a 'balanced' account, both sides getting the same amount of air-time (if the victim is lucky), and that device equals things out to the culprit's advantage.

The reality is separate from the words. (Mo, 1991: 111)

Ng might mistrust language, but language is all he has to convey events in *Danu*. His narrative is faced with the task of communicating the reality he claims in terms that make sense to a Western audience, because power is perceived ultimately to reside with them. Ng's narrative, then, is specifically addressed to an English-speaking audience. He reminds us that his narrative often translates Danuese and *malai* languages into English. When Ng refers to Mrs Goreng as '[m]y lady' (Mo, 1991: 316) he apologises for having to 'translate in this clumsy fashion and to the best of my limited ability the native title of respect by which, on my own insistence, I addressed her' (Mo, 1991: 316). Because the implied reader is specifically English-speaking, Ng often appropriates images widely disseminated in the popular imagination familiar to Western English speakers. These include figures from Western history or American television shows and films. Although Ng satirises the vacuity of those in the West who are seduced by style and image, he has little choice but to borrow such images in order to communicate the conflict to the West in terms that make sense to his implied audience. That is, Ng must participate in a process he criticised in his memories as a student in Toronto. The danger is that Ng's narrative perpetuates the turning of history into images that bear only a faint relation to the things they are intended to signify. This produces a tension, I argue, that exemplifies the potentially damaging relations between postmodernism and postcolonialism. That is, Ng struggles to represent the 'real life' (Mo, 1991: 229) of colonised *Danu* in such a way that secures the referential certainty of his narrative, because he is compelled to participate in the production of simulacra to make his point heard.

Let us consider first Ng's use of Western history for his terms of reference. On occasions, *Danu* seems an odd caricature of Western historical personages and situations, as Ng tries to make the scenario visible in terms of reference that will be recognised in the West. When Ng first describes the division of *Danu* into East and West he likens it to a 'kind of beleaguered, tropical Berlin' (Mo, 1991: 30). Many references are made to the history of fascist Germany.¹ When FAKOUM rations run low in Part Two, Maria and Osvaldo cut food rations to the children. This causes Ng to declare Maria as 'the Nazi doctor to his camp commandant:

¹ Indeed, there seems an echo of Nazi Germany in characters' names. Ng is addressed by Rosa as 'Hitler' (Mo, 1991: 26) due to his first name, Adolph, while Mrs Goreng's name recalls the prominent Nazi Goering.

the children expended fewer calories than the active combatants' (Mo, 1991: 184). Other images are appropriated. The election of Arsenio's aunt as FAKOUM president is to make FAKOUM 'less like military adventurers, frizzy-haired Napoleons' (Mo, 1991:68). When the *malais* threaten to invade Danu, it seems to Ng that the FAKOUM leaders begin to parody Fidel Castro as 'you didn't see them in civilian clothes anymore' (Mo, 1991: 71). Two of the journalists that visit Danu as part of Mrs Goreng's stage-managed representation of a pacified Danu are labelled by Ng as 'De Gaulle and Wellington' (Mo, 1991: 345). There is a double edge to these references. On one level, the references - particularly to the German fascist regime - do conjure a sense of the violence and genocide that the *malais* perpetrate. The events in Danu are deemed comparable with Nazi atrocities in Europe. The use of prominent figures from Western history implies, to an English-speaking readership, that events in Danu are just as momentous, important and far-reaching for the Danuese as the battles fought by Wellington or De Gaulle were for the British or the French. But, at another level, there is a lack of specificity about such comparisons due to their incongruity. This is especially evidenced when Martinho criticises Osvaldo's leadership of FAKOUM to Ng under the veil of praise for his brother as worthy of Napoleon's example. But when they begin to discuss the comparison in depth there is a realisation of the limited appropriateness of it to the reality in Danu:

'Of course,' I said, 'Napoleon didn't know when enough was enough. He should have never have tried to attack Moscow in the winter. Come to think of it, Hitler overreached himself too.'

Martinho nodded sagely. 'He should have listened to his civilian advisers, they say.' Then he remarked, 'Of course we don't have winter and summer here at the equator.'

'Just the dry and the rainy seasons,' I added. (Mo, 1991: 176)

This suggests an incommensurable gap between Napoleon's exploits and that of Osvaldo, Martinho, and others. Consequently, it asks us to question the propriety of Ng's vocabulary. His terms of reference might not bear witness at all to the reality of life in Danu, in that they cannot accommodate the specificity of what is taking place. Ng's narrative is caught in a dilemma where he can only argue for the truth of Danu by turning it into a series of often incongruous, slightly absurd images taken from moments in European history.

The dangers of Ng's narrative are foregrounded when Ng makes reference to television programmes. When he accompanies Rosa and Maria to a Danuese witch-doctor in the hills, Ng

is taken to task for his sneering attitude towards the witch-doctor's medical practices. Maria suggests his cynicism might be a product of his exposure to television:

'You're a fool, Adolph. [The witch-doctor] has got people to walk that hospitals in the home country would have given up on. And he's the best re-setter of bones I've ever seen.'

'Oh yes,' I sneered, no longer sucking up to Maria, 'and the bubbling shit is better than penicillin.'

'It's part of his treatment. Heat is the best way of stimulating blood-flow, you know. Any medic would tell you that. It doesn't have to be like Dr Kildare, you know, Adolph.' (Mo, 1991: 41)

The irony in this quotation is that Ng himself exemplifies the preconceptions and prejudices that his narrative must overcome if it is to change the perception of life in Danu. There is a sense that Ng's terms of reference belong to his time in the West; he cannot but help refract incidents through television images. When Ng reports a FAKINTIL attack on *malai* troops who are in the process of raping the women at Rosa's crèche, he compares such an attack to 'the US cavalry catching the Apaches with their pants down' (Mo, 1991: 108). The reference seems absurd and rather trite. Similarly, Ng compares Osvaldo's slaughter of 90 IP members as traitors to the *malais* with a John Wayne movie:

Had it been Hollywood, and it had been John Wayne taking the baddies back for trial, he'd have unlocked their handcuffs, given them back their six-shooters, and they'd have held off the Sioux together. Then the chief badman would have shot the brave aiming his arrow at Wayne's back. *You've seen the movie, I'm sure.* But this was real life, and Osvaldo kept the IP people tied together unarmed, anomalous though their position was. (Mo, 1991: 229 - emphasis added)

This quotation reveals the difficulties Ng faces when signifying 'real life'; in this instance it is by making negative comparisons to the movies. That is, if his readers are familiar with the movie (which Ng assumes), they understand better what has occurred as a consequence of the comparison. The use of cinematic images in this way, I suggest, problematises Ng's ability to signify the reality of what is taking place, and consequently damages the possibility of writing a critical history. This connection is exemplified by the ways that the *malais* use television as part of their weaponry. Revealingly, they build a television mast in Danu in order, in Mrs Goreng's words, to bring 'Danu into the twentieth century' (Mo, 1991: 361). The *malais'* leader will switch on the mast and signal 'the moment Danu is absorbed into the republic as the fifty-

eight province' (Mo, 1991: 361), making concrete the link between communications and colonial power. The effect of the television mast is to neutralise opposition to the *malais*, as demonstrated by the actions of those who crowd around the large TV sets in the Praca, once a place of fierce FAKOUM debate:

The audience no longer heckled the *malais* but enjoyed the programmes, calling out comments, arguing with each other. And the *malais* on duty, in white helmets, white gloves, and white gaiters, they also hung around the back of the crowds to sneak a look, instead of doing a beat of the whole square. What a great success it all was. (Mo, 1991: 364)

The television programmes effectively neutralise the hostility between the Danuese and the *malais*. The voices raised against the *malais* are now raised between the Danuese, who seem no longer concerned with contesting their colonisers. The effect is comparable with the neutralisation of critique that Jameson presents as a product of postmodern simulacra.

The neutralising effect of the television mast on critical opposition is also a consequence of Ng's terms of reference. Ng's alternative view of the *malais'* occupation is always in danger of perpetuating the very obsessiveness with style and image he otherwise criticises. In my view, Ng's narrative is trapped inside the very mode of communication he contests as unsuitable to signifying real life. As readers, we are held back from trusting Ng's testimony due to its dependence upon historical simulacra that seem ill-equipped to bear witness to events in Danu. There seems no space outside of the postmodernist production of simulacra that Ng can reach to produce a critical history that bears witness to the reality he has experienced. Postmodernism causes complex problems in this novel concerning the issue of the guarantee of critique, despite Ng's attempt to think through the consequences of the media upon colonial inequalities of power. The novel demonstrates how an attempt to engage with the issues of mass communications in order to contest dominant images contradicts that very oppositional process, just as the opposition of the Danuese in the Praca was silenced by the installation of a *malai* television mast. In order to fashion a space remote from the disabling consequences of postmodern simulacra, Ng is forced to argue that 'the reality is separate from the words' (Mo, 1991: 111) used by the *malais* about their occupation. But even this distinction cannot be maintained. Later, when Ng eventually escapes the conflict and arrives in Brazil, he

attempts to invent a new self, but realises that he cannot discard his experiences so easily. The image he uses to describe his attempt can be read as a bid to resist the consequences of postmodernism for his narrative:

I was trying to accomplish with my own small person what the *malais* hadn't been able to do to a nation. An identity and a history cannot be obliterated with a switch of a name or the stroke of a pen. I arrived in the vastness of a new country as what I thought a *tabula rasa* but there was writing underneath, the coded determinants of what I was and always would be inscribed in (what shall we say?) acetic acid or lemon juice which gradually browned and showed in the revealing action of the sunlight. (Mo, 1991: 406)

There are two models of language presented in this quotation. The first, recorded by 'the stroke of a pen', is the language common to the media, where any words can be produced about any situation. It reflects the postmodernist possibility of the infinite scriptability of history, where any representation of a scenario can be produced regardless of its relation to reality. This is what Ng has tried to resist in his narrative, by testifying to a reality that is separate from the words produced about it. The second language has a more reliable referential propensity, and, as implied in the image of acetic acid browning in the sun, cannot be hidden forever or written over. As such, it is coterminous with the necessity, perhaps vital for postcolonial writers, of safeguarding the relationship between the referent and language; a postcolonial practice that accepts, in Simon During's words, 'those practises and concepts (representation, history, evaluation) which postmodernism most strenuously denies' (During, 1985: 369). It is simply a case, it seems, of relinquishing the first language and rewriting history with the second. However, the distinction between each can only be made with difficulty, and falters due to Ng's description of his self as indelibly marked with an invisible writing that records his history and identity. Ng, by his own confession, is a man of the modern world who was not immune to seduction by simulacra as a student. His complicity with the modern world affects his narrative, as demonstrated by the problematic terms of reference he uses to represent the *malais'* occupation. Ng's self has been produced by the very structure he wishes to contest, and he struggles to find a language outside of it that conveys the reality of Danu. He shares with Gideon Chase the fate of remaining locked within a structure of representation he bitterly contests but cannot dismantle.

By foregrounding Ng's complicity with the perpetuation of simulacra through his

figurative language, *The Redundancy of Courage* reveals with penetration a dilemma for postcolonial critical practices: how to construct an oppositional critique that contests dominant images of conflict at the very site where those images are produced. This complicates the construction of an oppositional, referential history. Postmodernism seems ill-equipped to bear witness to the voices of those who, like Ng, are subject to colonial power. These postmodernist strategies of representation must be engaged with due to their intersection with relations of power, but that engagement dooms to failure the production of a critical history. In *The Redundancy of Courage*, it seems, there is little compatibility between postmodern and postcolonial practices in the production of a critical history, but no chance of separating them either.

The three novels I have studied focus upon different historical moments, and cultural specificities. It is perhaps unwise to impose upon them a coherence as a body of work. Yet, in each I detect varying degrees of pessimism concerning the juncture of postmodern and postcolonial practices. If, as Bhabha argues, this juncture makes possible a space where previously silenced voices can at last be heard, then Mo's novels doubt if the promise of this space can be achieved. In *Sour Sweet*, such a space seems fragile. The constant negotiations and splittings of the family enable strategies of survival that involve a critical appropriation of past knowledge, but also produce a dissonant, muted tone of melancholy as the novel closes. In *An Insular Possession* postmodernist modes of representation disturb conventional historical representation from within. Parody displaces a system of enunciability that structured the production of representations about Canton, Hong Kong and Macao in the 1830s and 1840s. The novel effects a displacement of that system that is repeated with a critical difference for the purposes of a postcolonial critique. However, little space is cleared where those colonised might seize the power to write history themselves. This betrays an anxiety that limits the otherwise effective critique of conventional historiography accomplished in this fascinating novel. In *The Redundancy of Courage*, that anxiety becomes a crisis, as this novel reveals the damaging effects of postmodernist processes of representation for the possibility of mounting a postcolonial critique. Ng's attempts to clear a space from where alternative representations of

Danuese life can be voiced have only a limited impact, and serve to perpetuate the dominant mode of representation. In each text, the juncture between postmodernism and postcolonialism produces an unresolved tension figured in a range of pessimistic attitudes.

Chapter 3:

Kazuo Ishiguro's Landscapes of History

The application of the word 'postcolonial' to Kazuo Ishiguro is difficult to warrant. Ishiguro was born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan, and moved to England at the age of six. He read English and Philosophy at the University of Kent at Canterbury, and completed in 1980 an M.A. in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia.¹ Of his four novels to date - *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), *The Remains of the Day*, (1989), and *The Unconsoled* (1995) - three are the focus of this chapter. *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* are concerned with life during and after the fervent militarism² that dominated Japanese politics from 1931 until the end of the Second World War. The themes of *The Remains of the Day* include the relationship between the British ruling class and German Nazis during the 1930s, and the changing condition of England both internally and as a world power in the aftermath of the war. Critics of Ishiguro's work have often been tempted to read these novels - regardless of their setting in Japan or England - as distinctly Japanese due to elements of Ishiguro's style. Typical is Bruce King's argument that Ishiguro's instincts 'are for the nuanced, the understated, elegant but significant gesture, similar to the deft brushwork of Japanese paintings. While Ishiguro can make comedy about the extremes of Oriental manners, his novels require us to understand by indirection, by analogy with the way Japanese conversations move politely around the matter at issue' (King, 1991a: 207). Reviewing Ishiguro's first three novels for the *New York Review of Books*, Gabrielle Annan argued that they were each 'explanations, even indictments, of Japanese-ness [...] He writes about guilt and shame incurred in the service of duty, loyalty, and tradition. Characters who place too high - too Japanese - a price on these values are punished for it' (Annan, 1989: 3).

These responses do not catch the sense of displacement that is vital to Ishiguro's fiction.

¹ Clive Sinclair provides an entertaining account of Ishiguro's early life in an interview published just prior to the award in 1987 of the Whitbread Book of the Year to Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World* (Sinclair, 1987: 36-37).

² The term 'militarist' is only one way of describing the Japanese state in the inter-war years. It has also been described as 'ultra-nationalist, fascist, totalitarian, [...] and Japanist' (Morris, 1993: vii). For a brief discussion of the propriety of each of these terms, see Ivan Morris's introduction to his book *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?* (Morris, 1961: vii-ix).

As Malcolm Bradbury argues, Ishiguro's 'Anglo-Japanese inheritance has been quite as powerful as Mo's Chinese one' (Bradbury 1993: 423). Bradbury urges that Ishiguro should be positioned with writers that range from 'V.S. Naipaul, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Anita Desai to Timothy Mo' (Bradbury, 1993: 425). Ishiguro's displacement is important for considering his position in relation to postmodernism and postcolonialism. This position can be approached productively through a comparison with Salman Rushdie. Both writers' imaginative relationship with the place of their birth influences their fiction. In his essay 'Imaginary Homelands', Rushdie discusses the difficulties he confronts when writing about India from a distance and stresses the imaginative relationship he has with India:

It may be writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of becoming mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge - which gives rise to profound uncertainties - that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities of villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie, 1991: 10)

Rushdie's use of the phrase 'imaginary homelands' conveys a vital doubleness. His India is neither purely fictional nor presented as real; it hovers somewhere in between. This is also true for Ishiguro's Japan. Like Rushdie, Ishiguro's process of looking back to Japan also gives rise to 'profound uncertainties'. His Japan is simultaneously imagined and concrete. His novels depict actual locations that have been scarred by momentous historical events. Yet they are shrouded in uncertainty. As readers we are made aware of the extent to which Ishiguro's narrators fashion the locations that feature in his work. A similar process occurs in the descriptions of the English landscape that play an important role in *The Remains of the Day*. Ishiguro's displacement is productive of a fiction in which, to borrow a phrase from Rushdie, 'imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect' (Rushdie, 1991: 10).

In an interview with Timothy Mo in 1982, Ishiguro described his sense of displacement in terms that recall Rushdie's comments about India:

I've never gone back to Japan since I was a child. I always fear going back there if I'm to ever write about Japan again. When I write, I find it very stimulating to make this kind of cultural, imaginative leap [...] Some people think I should be back in Japan, furiously scribbling notes on street-corners.

But I'm interested in an imagined territory. A fictional place. (Ishiguro, 1982b: 50)

The same doubleness that pervades Rushdie's 'imaginary homelands' is present in Ishiguro's use of the phrase 'imagined territory'. My reading of Ishiguro's novels will focus in particular on their imagined territories. This is because their descriptions of the landscape play an important role in the production of history in these texts. Ishiguro's first-person narrators are indicative of Ishiguro's position as a writer. They make an imaginative leap across time and space. Etsuko, the narrator of *A Pale View of Hills*, looks back to life in post-war Nagasaki from contemporary England. Ono and Stevens, the narrators of *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* respectively, are each at the end of their lives looking back upon a time before the Second World War that seems far removed from the moment of their remembering. As I explore, there is a strong sense that each novel's location is an imagined territory, seen from afar, refracted through consciousness. These imagined territories are not pure fictions. They bear the marks of historical events, and reflect the values of the societies that move through them. Indeed, they might be described as interstitial spaces. They exist in between the concrete and the imaginary, neither actual nor chimerical. Furthermore, the wastelands that Etsuko and Ono depict, and the English landscape that features so prominently in Stevens's narrative, reflect the end of an older order and the emergence of something different, yet not entirely new.

I want to spend a moment making a connection between the imaginary landscapes of Ishiguro's novels and some attitudes towards historiography voiced by critics influenced by postmodernist aesthetics. In both the role of the imagination is foregrounded. Certain critics influenced by structuralism have proposed that historical narratives do not enjoy a unique ontological status and are similar to more overtly imaginative writing. Two such critics are Roland Barthes and Hayden White. In his essay 'The Discourse of History', Barthes asks if historical narratives differ 'by some specific feature, by some indubitable pertinence, from imaginary narration as we find it in the epic, the novel, the drama?' (Barthes, 1986: 127). The point of his essay is to reveal history as, in his view, 'essentially an ideological elaboration or, to be more specific, an *imaginary* elaboration' (Barthes, 1986: 138). Histories are first and foremost narratives, acts of the imagination. Hayden White also focuses upon the imagination

in his work on historiography. He perceives the mind of the historian as an important agent in configuring historical incident for strategic purposes:

Histories, then, are not only about events but also about the possible sets of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure. These sets of relationships are not, however, immanent in the events themselves; they exist only *in the mind of the historian* reflecting upon them. (White, 1978: 94 - emphasis added)

Both Barthes and White highlight the role of the historian's imagination in producing narratives of the past for strategic reasons. Historical texts do not, it seems, reflect passively an objective historical truth. However, one of the potential problems of this perspective is revealed by Christopher Norris in his essay 'Postmodernising History: Right-wing revisionism and the uses of theory'. Norris takes issue with 'what Foucault, Hayden White and others have argued: namely, that history is a field of competing rhetorical or narrative strategies, a plural discourse which can always produce any number of alternative accounts' (Norris, 1988: 137). He argues that these ideas should be rendered suspect because they fortify the work of 'right-wing revisionist historians' (Norris, 1988: 137) by rendering unsavoury facts as indeterminate, purely rhetorical products. For Norris, postmodernism damagingly 'efface[s] the distinction between fact and fable [...] to undermine the very concept of historical reason as aimed at a better, more enlightened or accountable version of significant events' (Norris, 1988: 137). Although Norris is reductive in his representation of such diverse thinkers in his fervent attempt to discredit postmodernism, the issue he raises is important to a discussion of Ishiguro's novels. Because Ishiguro writes at a distance from his subject matter, his 'imaginary elaborations' are caught between each position in the debate I have briefly sketched above. His novels are to a degree 'imaginary elaborations' of specific historical occasions. But they are anxious about the consequences of approaching historiography in these terms. The result is a body of work that is characterised by a fascinating ambivalence. Ishiguro's novels hover between a conceptualisation of history as both concrete and imaginary. It is for this reason that I believe they can be read in the terms of the conjunction between postmodern and postcolonial practices. Ishiguro's work engages with a problematic confronted also by Farrell, Mo and Rushdie.

In this chapter I will often focus upon the imaginary territories of Ishiguro's fiction

because they are an important element of these novels' anxious representation of history. My reading of *A Pale View of Hills* is brief and gives priority to issues raised in Ishiguro's subsequent novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, which I examine more substantially. I have chosen to read these novels together due to their shared focus on a particular historical moment, the American occupation of Japan between 1945 and 1952. Each, I hazard, suggests the recuperation in the post-war years of an ideology coterminous with Japanese militarism that, on the surface, seems rejected by a younger generation of Japanese. My reading of *The Remains of the Day* examines three different visions of England that emerge from Stevens's narrative, and suggests that the transitions the novel depicts anticipate an emerging postmodern condition. This novel is particularly rewarding to read in the context of postmodern and postcolonial critiques of history, I propose, as it demonstrates how both an acceptance of and disquiet towards postmodernism may exist simultaneously in a tense relationship that cannot be resolved with satisfaction.

A Pale View of Hills and An Artist of the Floating World: Re-covering the past

The narrator of *A Pale View of Hills* is a Japanese widow, Etsuko, who lives as an old woman in England. During the visit of her daughter Niki, and prompted by the suicide of her daughter Keiko, Etsuko narrates her memories of life in Nagasaki in the aftermath of the falling of the atom bomb on the city on August 9th 1945. Her reference at the beginning of her narrative to the 'Americans soldiers as numerous as ever - for there was fighting in Korea' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 11), date her memories to the period of the Korean War that occurred between 1950 and 1953. The world, she argues, 'had a feeling of change about it' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 11). But the effects of the bomb are still uncomfortably close in people's minds. Etsuko narrates her life with her husband, Jiro, in a new housing block near some wasteland. She makes an acquaintance with an enigmatic woman, Sachiko, and her daughter, Mariko. Sachiko is soon to leave Japan for America with her boyfriend, Frank. The novel's climax depicts Etsuko encouraging a reluctant Mariko to look forward to her new life in America. Curiously, Etsuko tells Mariko that 'if you don't like it over there, we can always come back' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 173 - emphasis added). As Clive Sinclair commented about this small detail, it is clear that 'the

story [Etsuko] is telling is her own' (Sinclair, 1987: 36), refracted through the character of another. My attention in this novel is not towards its oblique representation of the effects of the atom bomb on Nagasaki. Rather, I focus upon the monumental changes to Japan about which many of the novel's characters often reflect. These changes, it can be discovered, are not as large as the characters assume, and mask the continuity of reactionary elements. I attend to the theme of change in my reading of *A Pale View of Hills* as it maps a process that is enacted with sophistication in Ono's narrative in *An Artist of the Floating World*, and has consequences for Ono's rewriting of history.¹ My discussion of *A Pale View of Hills* concerns two aspects in particular: its descriptions of the landscape, and the tensions between older and younger generations of Japanese.

Janet Hunter argues that '[t]he enormity of the transformation which Japan has undergone since the desperate months of summer 1945 is not easy to comprehend' (Hunter, 1989: 307). The American occupation of Japan had certainly brought restructuring to Japanese politics, education and culture. But in his discussion of the changes that affected Japan in the immediate post-war period, W.G. Beasley points out that there were also continuities between the years before and after the war. Change was certainly monumental, but not as total as might be presumed:

So sharp was the break with what had gone before that one is tempted to treat September 1945 as the end, not of a chapter, but of a story, making all that followed part of a fresh beginning. Indeed, in many ways it was. Defeat had acted as a catharsis, exhausting the emotions which the Japanese had hitherto exhausted their relations with the outside world. It also opened the way for radical changes in social and political institutions, imposed by the victors. Yet this change of direction can be overstated. Once the shock wore off, and the Japanese again began to take the initiative in directing their own affairs, they gave to the new something of the attitudes and the personalities of the old: less of America of the 1940s, more of Japan of the 1920s and 1930s. The result is that in many contexts one can trace today a far greater continuity with the recent past than would at one time have seemed possible. (Beasley, 1990: 214)

In both *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, this sense of continuity that

¹ Other interesting themes in this novel include the psychological processes involved in Etsuko's act of memory that displaces her past onto another, perhaps fictional figure. A study of the novel attentive to Etsuko's psychological processes in narrating her life in Japan has already been made by Fumio Yoshioka (Yoshioka, 1988). Another concerns bearing witness to the nuclear holocaust, and renders the novel readable in the context of what one critic calls 'nuclear discourse' (Rowland, 1994: 151) - texts that represent the scarcely imaginable horrors of nuclear destruction. However, to read the novel in this context would require a differently focused discussion that is beyond the immediate concerns of this thesis.

exists underneath perceived fundamental changes can be detected. It is particularly visible in descriptions of the landscape. Let us proceed by considering Etsuko's remembering of her life in post-war Japan. She describes the wasteground where she lived with Jiro and Ogata immediately after the war. The wasteground is an imaginary territory, marked by historical incident but also a construct of Etsuko's mind. It is a product created by the atom bomb. Once the site of a small village, after the falling of the atom bomb 'all that *remained* were charred ruins' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 11 - emphasis added). The terms 'remains' is important in Ishiguro's fiction. As a concept it is double-edged. On the one hand 'remains' implies change by drawing attention to an occurrence of destruction. On the other hand, it implies a form of lingering continuity, the past remaining visible in the present. The Japan depicted in Etsuko's narrative is poised between these two senses of 'remains' that co-exist at a liminal point. Her description of the wasteland captures both senses of change and continuity. The wasteland is an interstitial space that exists at a point between the old and the new. Change is emphasised by the rebuilding of a community on the remains of a village. The wasteground is now the home of a new generation of Japanese made up of young, married couples whose men work for the post-war 'expanding firms' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 12). But the changes occurring in the present are new only so far. The rebuilding work, that includes the blocks of apartments where Etsuko lives, has 'come to a halt' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 11). Officials can be seen occasionally taking measurements on the wasteground, but 'the months went by and nothing was done' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 11). It is also a place of poor drainage, with craters 'filled with stagnant waters' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 11). This implies a sense of lingering. Unsightly things do not disappear, but remain to cause discomfort. Etsuko remembers an 'unmistakable air of transience there' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 12). The wasteground is symbolic of a transitory moment in Japanese attitudes. The older certainties of the past are in ruins, but are not totally absent in the immediate post-war years. A new Japan is being constructed upon the remains of the old. Despite her attention to change and impermanence, we can glimpse through Etsuko's narrative elements that linger from the defeated, nationalist Japan of the 1930s in the post-war generation of Japanese. The younger Japanese may openly repudiate the former, but they carry over elements from an older generation into the post-war period. This questions the extent of change to which many

characters often refer.

The doubleness conveyed by 'remains' is visible in the familial relationships depicted in *A Pale View of Hills*. Many of the characters refer fleetingly to the ruin of their families caused by the war. Etsuko's family history is uncertain. Ogata, Etsuko's father-in-law, sheltered her after the bomb fell on Nagasaki. She mentions the mysterious Nakamara-san who, it is hinted, was her betrothed before the war. Under her bed, Etsuko keeps a black box containing 'several letters I had preserved - unknown to my husband - together with two or three small photographs' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 71). Sachiko's sentiment, 'I never thought a war could change things so much' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 75) summarises the mood of the novel at one level and is often repeated in many similar statements. Change takes on a political significance in the relationship between Jiro and his father, Ogata-san. Their relationship suggests a fracture between the Japan of the pre-war years and a new Japan that is emerging from the ruins of defeat. But it also questions the width of that fracture. The relationship between father and son is strained and tense, and there can be detected a discontinuity between different generations of Japanese in their exchanges. As if to emphasise this, father and son have few physical resemblances. Jiro is small, fastidious about his appearance and has a tendency 'to hunch forward - in a manner not unlike that of a boxer' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 28). He works in an office. Ogata is physically strong and has 'a relaxed, generous manner about him' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 28-29). He is an embryonic version of Ono, the narrator of *An Artist of the Floating World*. He has worked as a teacher, presumably of art because he tells Etsuko that painting 'doesn't give me the satisfaction it once did' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 33). Ogata represents the older generation of Japanese that were prominent up to and during the war, and his presence is an unwelcome reminder for the younger Japanese of this earlier time. He approves of Jiro attending a class reunion because '[o]ne shouldn't be so quick to forget old allegiances. And it's good to glance back now and then' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 29). His values are at odds with the American process of democratisation. He is incredulous that the newly implemented system of democratic government enables wives to vote differently from their husbands, abandoning their 'obligations' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 65). The American occupation of Japan between 1945 and 1952 is deemed counter-productive to Japan's cultural uniqueness, as evidenced by his comments to Jiro:

'Discipline, loyalty, such things held Japan together once. That may sound fanciful, but it's true. People were bound by a sense of duty. Towards one's family, towards superiors, towards the country. But now instead there's all this talk of democracy. You hear it whenever people want to be selfish, whenever they want to forget obligations.' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 65)

The values Ogata espouses unsettle Jiro, who, it seems, wishes to forget them. He forces Jiro to 'glance back' at things he would rather not confront. For this reason scenes between Ogata and Jiro are often adversarial. On one occasion Ogata asks Jiro to respond to an article written by his former student, Shigeo, that represents disapprovingly the careers of Ogata and his friend, Endo. When Ogata asks Jiro if he has fulfilled his wishes during a game of chess, Jiro evades the issue by claiming to be 'too busy' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 59). He is unwilling to perform the task. The game is interrupted by the surprise visit of Jiro's colleagues, and the chess pieces become disturbed. When Ogata invites Jiro to complete the game later, he begins to criticise Jiro's strategy, warning his son that he has not paid attention to what he has been taught. Jiro's response is to admit defeat:

' [...] A game isn't won and lost at a point when the king is finally cornered. The game's sealed when a player gives up having any strategy at all. When his soldiers are all scattered, they have no common cause, and they move one piece at a time, that's when you've lost.'

'Very well Father, I admit it. I've lost. Now perhaps we can forget about it.' [...]

'Why Jiro, this is sheer defeatism. The game's far from lost, I've just told you. You should be planning your defence now, to survive and fight me again.' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 89)

Ogata and Jiro, I suggest, are using the game of chess to articulate their differing views concerning Japan's failure in the war. Jiro's acceptance of defeat invites a reading of his mood as exemplary of the emergent Japanese generation - admitting defeat, accepting loss and trying to forget. For Ogata, this unwillingness to follow that which has been taught is incomprehensible, nothing short of giving in to opposition. Jiro's mood seems typical. It emerges also in the comments of Ogata's former pupil, Shigeo, during a visit from his old master. The importance of Japan's culture is openly rejected by Shigeo, who accuses Ogata of doing great damage as a teacher by espousing principles that have led to destruction:

' [...] In your day, children in Japan were taught terrible things. They were taught lies of the most damaging kind. Worst of all, they were taught not to

see, not to question. And that's why the country was plunged into the most evil disaster in her entire history.'

'We may have lost the war,' Ogata-san interrupted, 'but that's no reason to ape the ways of the enemy. We lost the war because we didn't have enough guns and tanks, not because our people were cowardly, not because our country was shallow. [...]' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 147)

For Ogata, defeat was caused by a lack of military strength - the propriety of the war is never in doubt. Shigeo believes the war rendered redundant the values cherished by Ogata and his contemporaries. He tells Ogata that 'we live in a different age from those days when . . . when you were an influential figure' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 146), implying that the militaristic Japan Ogata supports has been discredited, and superseded by a better society.

However, Shigeo's vocabulary suggests that elements from Ogata's Japan may well remain embedded in the attitudes of the younger generation, despite their seeming opposition to the previous generation. Shigeo condemns Ogata for causing the imprisonment of five teachers of Nishizaka in April, 1938. He is delighted that 'those men are free now, [because] they'll help us reach a new dawn' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 148). The reference to a 'new dawn' reflects the rhetoric of an older generation, particularly as it is redolent of the Japanese emblem of the rising sun. Similarly, attitudes towards women in the novel can be read as evidence of the lingering ideology of the previous epoch. The young male characters are seen to treat women with contempt. In one incident, Jiro is cross that Etsuko has allegedly moved his tie from its proper place, despite the fact that she ironed it for him the previous day. He accuses Etsuko of 'meddling' in his affairs (Ishiguro, 1982a: 132). When his colleagues from work make a surprise visit to his apartment, he automatically expects Etsuko to prepare tea, giving her an 'angry look' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 62) that prompts her to retreat to the kitchen. One of Jiro's colleagues, Hanada, tells an incredulous Ogata how he beat his wife when she voted for a different political party, blaming her decision on the fact that 'women [...] don't understand politics. They think they can choose the country's leaders the same way they choose dresses' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 63). Ogata's incredulity significantly does not concern the violence Hanada uses against his wife, but the fact that his wife has voted differently. Later he tells Jiro that '[a] few years ago that [female voting] would have been unthinkable' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 65). There is a momentary point of convergence between the men. Something from the previous

generation still remains in their behaviour. As Hanada demonstrates, Japanese young men might welcome the new businesses and the education system brought in during the American occupation, but they seem less comfortable with female suffrage introduced as part of the American process of democratisation.¹ It is perhaps revealing to read these attitudes in the light of attitudes towards women espoused by Japanese nationalists in the 1930s, as they seem commensurate with each other. Kita Ikki, called by one historian the 'founder of modern Japanese fascism' (Morris, 1963: xii) makes statements against female suffrage in his influential *General Outline of Measures for the Reconstruction of Japan* (1919) that became popular with right-wing activists. Kita argues that women have no place in politics and are best suited as 'good wives and wise mothers' (Morris, 1963: 23). He continues that '[a]nyone who has observed the stupid talkativeness of Western women or the piercing quarrels among Chinese women will be thankful that Japanese women have continued on the right path' (Morris, 1963: 23-24). In the attitudes of Jiro and Hanada, this ideology to an extent remains. This point calls for a reconsideration of the sense of fundamental change to which many characters refer. In *A Pale View of Hills*, references to change have two effects. They function as a way of wilfully forgetting the past, disrupting a sense of continuity between past and present. As Mrs Fujiwara says to Etsuko, '[w]e've all had to put things behind us' (Ishiguro, 1982a: 76). Many characters, particularly the younger characters, are keen to refer to the great change between pre- and post-war Japan. But the attitudes of the young male characters, like Jiro and Shigeo, suggest this might be a posturing that conceals the continuity of older elements in the present. In seeming to renounce the activities of a past generation, they negotiate the retrieval of elements from a previous age in the present while repudiating the rhetoric of an era discredited by defeat and humiliation.

The double sense of 'remains' that emerges in *A Pale View of Hills* is also an important aspect of *An Artist of the Floating World*. This novel brings to the fore an understanding of the

¹ Janet Hunter has written about the changes made to the political rights of women as a consequence of democratisation (Hunter, 1989: 137-157). In the general election of 1946, women were allowed to stand as candidates and vote. 67% of women voted in the election, and 39 female candidates were elected. The civil code of 1948 removed in law women's subordination to the male. The effects were significant. Hunter records that '[t]he abolition of the *ie* (family) and the end of primogeniture provided women with legal competence, equal rights regarding marriage, domicile, divorce and inheritance. The number of divorces initiated by women dramatically increased. However, the economic and social straits of the immediate post-war years were a limiting factor on women's availing themselves of their new rights' (Hunter, 1989: 150). Hanada's behaviour with his golf-club perhaps intimates one of these 'social straits'.

role of language in positing a sense of fundamental change in order to mask continuity with the past. My reading of this novel will develop the focus upon the relationship between imagined territories and generational conflicts. *An Artist of the Floating World* is the story of Ono, a retired painter of influence during the 1930s, who looks back to his life as an artist before the war. His narrative, in four sections, occurs between October 1948 and June 1950. The dates are significant. The war trials of prominent Japanese figures were conducted between May 1946 and November 1948. Ono's reflections begin at a moment when these trials were reaching their climax and verdicts were pending. They are contextualised by a public process of reflection and judgement upon the years of war just passed, and Ono's memories reflect these processes at a personal level. He is witness to several moments when he stands accused as a participant in Japan's militarism which has brought defeat and desolation. As he recounts his present-day visits to Mrs Kawakami's bar, he refers to 'the cynicism and bitterness of our day' (Ishiguro, 1986: 21), and recounts an incident suffered by his friend Shintaro:

'Why, Obasan,' Shintaro put in, 'just the other day, I greeted someone in the street, thinking it was someone I knew. But the man obviously thought I was a madman. He walked away without replying!'

Shintaro seemed to regard this as an amusing story and laughed loudly. Mrs Kawakami smiled, but did not join in his laughter. (Ishiguro, 1986: 75)

Anecdotes like these suggest that the increasing isolation of Shintaro and his contemporaries is due to their complicity with Japanese imperialism. Indeed, Shintaro cannot get a job after the war without publicly distancing himself from Ono. That Ono is out of favour with others is evident when he visits his ex-pupil Kuroda. Although Kuroda is out, a young man, Enchi, cheerfully invites him to wait. But when Ono's identity is established, Enchi becomes hostile and requests that he leaves as Kuroda 'will not wish to see you' (Ishiguro, 1986: 112). He is surprised that Ono has dared to visit. When Enchi tells of Kuroda's treatment while under arrest, he suggests that those once in positions of power should feel guilty: '[...] Traitor. That's what they called him. Every minute of every day. But we all know who the real traitors were.' (Ishiguro, 1986: 113). Yet again, Ono's complicity with imperialism is suggested through the mouth of his grandson Ichiro, who parrots his father's explanation for Ono's retirement :

Ichiro [...] looked up and asked: 'Was Oji a famous artist once?'

'A famous artist?' I gave a laugh. 'I suppose you might say that. Is that what your mother says?'

'Father says you used to be a famous artist. But you had to finish.'

'I've retired, Ichiro. Everyone retires when they get to a certain age. It's only right, they deserve the rest.'

'Father says you had to finish. Because Japan lost the war.' (Ishiguro, 1986: 32)

There is a similar doubleness in Ichiro's repeated use of 'had to finish' as with the concept of 'remains'. 'Finish' signifies the resolution or termination of a particular process. But the phrase 'had to finish' suggests compulsion. That is, something has been brought to an abrupt end, prematurely. The novel asks us to think again about the defeat of 1930s Japanese nationalism between these two alternatives. Has its ideology been terminated, and is in the post-war era discredited and no longer valid? Or did it finish only through compulsion, and is available for recovery in post-war Japan?

The ambiguity that Ono's narrative generates keeps each alternative valid. He appears publicly to accept his part in the previous regime. During dinner with the family of Taro, his daughter's husband, he readily admits that 'much of what I did was ultimately harmful to our nation' (Ishiguro, 1986: 123). However, this admission is something of a masquerade. He seems to concede to the view voiced by Suichi, the husband of Ono's daughter Setsuko, that '[b]rave young men die[d] for stupid causes, and the real culprits are still with us. Afraid to show themselves for what they are, to admit their responsibility' (Ishiguro, 1986: 58). But the shape of Ono's narrative suggests that, like the younger Japanese such as Suichi, he rewrites history in order to lay the blame for his participation upon the previous generation. His seeming acceptance of guilt is strategic. For this reason, his narrative prompts a discussion of the consequences of conceiving of history as primarily an 'imaginary elaboration'. His narrative functions to produce referential uncertainty, and exploits the mobility of historical representation in order to blame his own father for his complicity with the militarists, rather than any fervent nationalist sentiment on his part.

My argument involves a close reading of Ono's narrative, and I move now to explore in detail its distinctive shape. Ono once worked under the supervision of Mr Moriyama as an artist of the 'floating world', and his narrative is influenced in part by the conventions of this school of art. As G.B. Sanson explains, the art of the floating world, or *ukiyo*, originated in the Genroku

period of Japanese history (1688-1703).¹ It depicts the pleasure districts of Japanese towns established in this period, owing to increased mercantile activity. As merchants acquired a large amount of disposable wealth from increased trade, the towns developed specific quarters featuring

theatres and restaurants, wrestling booths and houses of assignation, with their permanent population of actors, dancers, singers, story-tellers, jesters, courtesans, bath-girls and itinerant purveyors, among whom mingled the profligate sons of rich merchants, dissolute samurai and naughty apprentices. (Sanson, 1952: 477)

It was a world 'constantly changing, exciting and up to date' (Varley, 1973: 122). The arts of *ukiyo* depicted this stimulating, ribald lifestyle. A new prose genre, *ukiyo-zoshi*, focused upon erotic tales of bawdy townsmen and promiscuous women. 'It was not a literature for the prudish,' writes W.G. Beasley, 'but it was bursting with life' (Beasley, 1990: 20). In painting, *ukiyo-e* chiefly depicted the women of the pleasure quarters and kabuki actors. Popular paintings were cut into wood-blocks from which multiple prints were produced.² However, just as important as the decadence and excitement depicted in *ukiyo* is the sense of insubstantiality and constant change. H. Paul Varley explains the co-existence of these two moods that are connected by the term:

Ukiyo, although used specifically from about [the Genroku period] to designate such demimondes, meant in the broadest sense the insubstantial and everchanging existence in which man is enmeshed. To medieval Buddhists, this had been a wretched and sorrowful existence, and *ukiyo* always carried the connotation that life was fundamentally sad; but, in Genroku times, the term was more commonly taken to mean a world that was pleasurable precisely

¹ The Genroku period describes a distinct cultural phase in Japanese history when the traders and merchants in Japanese towns enjoyed a period of prosperity and began to fashion for themselves a lifestyle that disturbed the ruling samurai class. H. Paul Varley describes the period as characterised by 'a numerically significant and prosperous class of merchants who, although still regarded as inferior by their samurai masters, came increasingly to assert their cultural independence' (Varley, 1973: 122). W.G. Beasley draws two conclusions about the period: 'One is that economic change was creating an 'alternative society' alongside the feudal one, but had not yet given rise to a political philosophy appropriate to it. The other is that Japan was moving [...] in the direction of something more obviously indigenous and less completely the prerogative of an élite' (Beasley, 1990: 20).

² A typical artist of *ukiyo-e* was Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806), whose paintings of eroticised Japanese women with breasts exposed - such as 'Studies in Physiognomy: Ten Kinds of Women' - are paradigmatic of the genre. Ishiguro's familiarity with the genre of *ukiyo-e* is intimated by the fact that the artist Mr Moriyama, with whom Ono spends some time, is known as 'the modern Utamaro' (Ishiguro, 1986: 140). A collection of *ukiyo-e* was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum between September and November 1973, and many reproductions of the art displayed have been collected in R.A. Crighton's fascinating book, *The Floating World: Japanese popular prints 1700-1900* (Crighton, 1973).

because it was up-to-date. (Varley, 1973: 122)

Ono's narrative is influenced by the sombre insubstantiality of *ukiyo*. It has a temperate, elegiac tone that reflects perhaps Ono's sadness at the passing of his previous life. His daughter Noriko tells her sister Satsuko that '[y]ou've got to keep [Father] occupied or he starts to mope' (Ishiguro, 1986: 13). Ono seems happier taking refuge in his memories of a world that has expired. At one point he stands upon the Bridge of Hesitation outside his house and watches two plumes of smoke against the sky that, reminding him of a funeral pyre, put him 'in a melancholy mood' (Ishiguro, 1986: 28). His days frequenting the pleasure-quarters before the war are now the incorporeal stuff of memory, commensurate with the sense of insubstantiality embedded in *ukiyo* that is described to Ono by his teacher, Mr Moriyama: 'the best things [...] are put together of a night and vanish in the morning' (Ishiguro, 1986: 150). However, the insubstantiality highlighted in *ukiyo* is of service to Ono's strategic narrative. His text exorcises the guilt he feels as a collaborator with the Japanese militarists of the 1930s by making his past as insubstantial as the heady pleasures of the floating world. As a consequence, the narrative revisits the past through a carefully controlled act of the imagination, one that demonstrates how the ability to open history up to revision can deflect guilt and blame elsewhere.

As in *A Pale View of Hills*, a sense of change and lingering is created by descriptions of the landscape. Ono's Japan is a landscape of remains. His new house - once the property of the prestigious Akira Sugimura - has suffered bomb damage. It is full of 'the cobwebs and mould that I have not been able to keep out [...] the large gaps in the ceiling, shielded from the sky only by sheets of tarpaulin' (Ishiguro, 1986: 12). The pleasure district of Ono's anonymous city, called the *Migi-Hidari*, where Ono spent much time in the 1930's, has been devastated. Mrs Kawakami's bar is now 'in the midst of a graveyard' (Ishiguro, 1986: 27) characterised by 'heaps of broken brick and timber, and [...] pieces of piping protruding from the ground like weeds' (Ishiguro, 1986: 27). The old pleasure-district is a place of 'skeletal remains' (Ishiguro, 1986: 77). At one moment, Ono describes the new city corporation apartment blocks in such a way as to emphasise an overlapping between the old and the new:

Clusters of new houses have appeared towards the foot of the hill down which I have just come. And further along the riverbank, where a year ago there was

only grass and mud, a city corporation is building apartment blocks for future employees. But these are still far from completion, and when the sun is low on the river, one might even mistake them for the bombed ruins still to be found in certain parts of the city. (Ishiguro, 1986: 99)

The emergent can, when viewed at a certain moment, be mistaken for the remains of the old. Both a sense of change and of lingering are promoted in this passage. Beneath the immediate surface impression of the new Japan there remains elements from the defeated Japan of old. Ono's narrative works in this way, layering memories upon each other. The effect is two-fold. First, his transpositions render things less determinate and complicate perception. Consider, for example, the curious syntagmatic order of Ono's memories. Rather than proceeding in a linear temporal fashion, Ono recounts his memories in such a way as to cultivate referential uncertainty. His narrative is structured by the repetition of key words or phrases which overlap and connect two different points in time. When Ono describes his chance meeting with Noriko's first betrothed, Mr Miyake, he remembers that Miyake used the phrase 'the greatest cowardice of all' (Ishiguro, 1986: 56) when relating to Ono his feelings about the many older Japanese who still hold positions of power after the war. But he immediately doubts the certainty of this anecdote:

Certainly, phrases like 'the greatest cowardice of all' sound much more like Suichi than the mild-mannered young Miyake [...] In fact, now I think of it, I am sure Suichi used it that very evening, after the ceremony of Kenji's ashes. (Ishiguro, 1986: 56)

At one immediate level, such confusion suggests a common ill-feeling shared by the younger generation towards Ono and his contemporaries. But his uncertainty functions to uncouple such phrases from their speakers in order to breed doubt. His moments of indecision alert the reader to the unreliability of his statements. By linking disparate moments in time through common phrases, Ono's narrative becomes an exercise in sophisticated temporal layering. Behind each phrase or instance might lie alternative referential possibilities.

Ono's manipulation of time can be demonstrated by a brief consideration of the temporal references in the 'October, 1948' section of the novel. He begins by remembering the acquisition of his house 'some fifteen years ago' (Ishiguro, 1986: 7), then proceeds to recall Setsuko's visit 'last month' (Ishiguro, 1986: 12). References to time become increasingly vague

as he proceeds. Ono visits Mrs Kawakami's bar 'just the other evening' (Ishiguro, 1986: 19). His meeting there with Shintaro prompts a recollection of Shintaro and his brother Yoshio 'in 1935 or 1936' (Ishiguro, 1986: 20). After this digression, the narrative returns to Mrs Kawakami's bar, but now Shintaro is mysteriously absent. The ensuing conversation between Mrs Kawakami and Ono also occurs 'the other night' (Ishiguro, 1986: 21), but Shintaro's absence suggests that this night is not the same as Ono's initial visit to the bar. The novel is full of such phrases as 'one night recently' (Ishiguro, 1986: 22) and 'in those days' (Ishiguro, 1986: 23). When, later in this section, Ono declares '[y]esterday, as I was enjoying the tram ride down to the quiet suburb of Arakawa' (Ishiguro, 1986: 57), the temporal reference is virtually meaningless as we have no certainty as to what might constitute today. Temporal certainty is concealed beneath a narrative that often layers moments in time upon each other. By moving between layers, Ono can exploit the uncertainty this creates, and deflect blame for his involvement with militarism onto his father.

The second consequence of this layering is the production of a curious concatenation of cause and effect. A scene early in the novel between Ono and his father keeps returning at important moments in the text. It becomes a focal point of Ono's strategic narrative layering. The scene is central in defining for him a sense of an artist's significance. As a young boy, he is required to attend weekly 'business meetings' (Ishiguro, 1986: 41), where his father discusses the accounts of his business to his baffled son. Ono considers that his father 'wished to impress upon me from that early age his expectations that I would eventually take over the family business' (Ishiguro, 1986: 42). His youthful interest in art contravenes his father's wishes, resulting in a tense confrontation. His father burns his paintings and attacks his pursuit of art as evidence of his 'dislike of useful work' (Ishiguro, 1986: 46) that characterises all artists:

'Artists,' my father's voice continued, 'live in squalor and poverty. They inhabit a world which gives them every temptation to become weak-willed and deprived. Am I not right, Sachiko?' (Ishiguro, 1986: 46)

Ono later says to his mother that his father's actions have only 'succeeded in kindling [...] my ambition' (Ishiguro, 1986: 47). He renounces his father's preoccupation with business as meaningless - a moronic 'fingering of coins, hour after hour' (Ishiguro, 1986: 48) - and declares

his determination to transcend such a pitiful existence, to 'rise above such a life' (Ishiguro, 1986: 47). These feelings, it seems, influence Ono's actions for the rest of his days. He remains determined to prove that an artist can indeed perform 'useful work'. He seizes many opportunities to live a life that is not merely ordinary but that demonstrates his 'ability to think and judge for myself, even if it meant *going against the sway* of those around me' (Ishiguro, 1986: 69 - emphasis added). His delight in securing a job at Takeda's firm in 1913 more than compensates for the 'unhappy conditions' (Ishiguro, 1986: 65) with which he must live. But he becomes frustrated with life at the Takeda firm, and in particular with the firm's paintings upon which much of its wealth rests:

the essential point about the sort of things we were commissioned to paint - geishas, cherry trees, swimming carps, temples - was that they looked 'Japanese' to the foreigners to whom they were shipped out, and all finer points of style were quite likely to go unnoticed. (Ishiguro, 1986: 69)

Ono conceives of his life in the same terms as his art - he is disturbed that both might go unnoticed by others. He comes to consider life at the firm in a pejorative sense as the stuff of business. It is a place where 'work-horses [...] toil under Master Takeda to earn their living. But those of us with serious ambition must look elsewhere' (Ishiguro, 1986: 71). Once again, Ono's ambition has been kindled through the rejection of a life at the service of business. The scene recalls his rejection of his father's business. Ono's disquieted feelings at Takeda's firm remind the reader of the earlier scene.

Other scenes seem similarly transposed upon the original scene between Ono and his father. When Ono joins Mr Moriyama at the prefecture, he finds that his life is dominated by the strong influence of his teacher who he must imitate:

We lived throughout those years almost entirely in accordance with [Mori-san's] values and lifestyle, and this entailed spending much time exploring the city's 'floating world' - the night-time world of pleasure, entertainment and drink which formed the backdrop for all our paintings. (Ishiguro, 1986: 145)

Ono's success as an artist of the floating world might seem to justify his decision to leave the Takeda firm. But life with the influential Mr Moriyama soon echoes Ono's life in his father's house as a child. When Mr Moriyama completes a new painting, his pupils are summoned to a

room in his villa to admire his work. Disloyalty to Mori-san is severely punished. If a painting does not reflect Mori-san's favoured style then the guilty artist 'would abandon the painting, or in some cases, burn it along with the refuse' (Ishiguro, 1986: 140). We are reminded of the fate of Ono's paintings at the hands of his father. When Mori-san's best pupil, Sasaki, transgresses the favoured style, his work is confiscated and he is banished as a 'traitor' (Ishiguro, 1986: 143). So, in his quest to 'never follow the crowd blindly' (Ishiguro, 1986: 93), Ono has become part of another community that stifles his ambition. Like Ono's father, Mr Moriyama burns paintings. Ono eventually becomes dissatisfied with his life at the prefecture. This is demonstrated when Mr Moriyama's old friend Gisaburo visits the prefecture one evening. Ono is discovered brooding alone, remote from the the frivolity of the evening's entertainments.

Life with Mr Moriyama frustrates Ono's ambitions to rise 'above the sway' (Ishiguro, 1986: 73) of other people's lives, and makes him receptive to the approach of Matsuda, a member of the Okada-Shingeo Society. When Matsuda visits Ono at the prefecture, he applauds his work in exactly the terms upon which he places much value: 'I am a true lover of art. I have my beliefs and passions. And when every once in a while I come across a talent that truly excites me, then I feel I must do something about it' (Ishiguro, 1986: 89). Matsuda offers him another possibility of rising 'above the sway'. Indeed, Matsuda's comments concerning contemporary artists seem to mock Ono's current importance as he accuses him of falling under the influence of others rather than producing his own work. In the light of Ono's father's dismissal of artists as 'weak-willed and depraved' (Ishiguro, 1986: 46), Matsuda's words would seem to strike a particular chord:

'There's a certain kind of artist these days,' [Matsuda] went on, 'whose greatest talent lies in hiding away from the real world. Unfortunately, such artists appear to be in dominance at present, and you, Ono, have come *under the sway* of one of them. Don't look so angry, it's true. Your knowledge of the world is *like a child's*. I doubt, for instance, you could even tell me who Karl Marx was.' (Ishiguro, 1986: 171 - emphasis added)

Matsuda's use of the word 'sway' has a particular inflection for Ono, when we recall his fierce intention of continuously 'going against the sway of those around me' (Ishiguro, 1986: 69). Furthermore, Matsuda talks to him like a child, accusing him of having a child's knowledge of world affairs. The incident takes on a particular significance if it transposed upon the scene

between the child Ono and his father. Like Ono, Matsuda is antipathetic towards 'greedy businessmen' (Ishiguro, 1986: 172) who he argues are causing poverty to spread throughout Japan. The rhetoric of Matsuda, a Japanese nationalist who demands the restoration of the 'Imperial Majesty of the Emperor' (Ishiguro, 1986: 173) and 'an empire as powerful and wealthy as those of the British and the French' (Ishiguro, 1986: 174), is punctuated with language which, for Ono, has a specific significance when contextualised against his conflict with his father. Matsuda argues that the emergent nationalist feeling is motivated by a need 'to achieve something of real value' (Ishiguro, 1986: 173), words which echo Ono's personal quest for permanent worth. Later, when Ono defends his new, nationalistic paintings to the horrified Tortoise, it can be noticed the extent to which his vocabulary has become inflected by the tones of imperialism and overlaps with Matsuda's words:

'Tell me, Tortoise, don't you have ambitions to one day produce paintings of genuine importance? I don't mean simply work that we may admire and praise amongst ourselves here in the villa. I refer to work of real importance. Work that will be a significant contribution to the people of our nation.' (Ishiguro, 1986: 163)

As these references to ambition, importance, and significance make evident, Ono's personal values coincide with the nationalistic rhetoric of Matsuda.

Let us pause for a moment. By retracing Ono's confrontation with his father in several scenes, I hope to underline the strategy he uses to negotiate his guilt. He quite meticulously attempts to represent his involvement in Japanese imperialism as motivated by reasons other than an impassioned belief in the superiority of Japan. The layering of several scenes upon the initial confrontation between Ono and his father constructs an alternative genealogy that explains his support for Matsuda and the imperialists as something different from a fervent support for their views. Whereas Suichi and his contemporaries seize upon his involvement with imperialism as the means he adopted to give meaning to his life, Ono attempts to formulate an alternative perspective which displaces the view that he is a traitor or criminal. That is, in this version of events, he *happened* into supporting Japanese imperialism primarily as a consequence of his own ambitious quest for significance, and not because he was first and foremost an eager nationalist. Ironically, Ono has much in common with the younger Japanese

that criticise him, in placing the blame for events squarely at the feet of an earlier generation. The replication of moments where he tries to rise above the sway deflects blame away from Ono concerning his participation in a discredited regime. In these terms, the curious syntagmatic order of his narrative is something of an illusion. Things are not as ambiguous as they might seem. Ono requires ambiguity in order to complicate his involvement with Japanese nationalism. But by tracing an alternative genealogy, his narrative is more orderly than its progression suggests. There is still a concatenation between cause and effect posited in this novel. The novel manoeuvres between two kinds of narrative structure. The first breeds ambiguity, while the second preserves a sense of order in the genealogy that can be traced between several important, similar scenes. In the light of Ono's narrative, it is productive to look again at Hayden White's comment that 'sets of relationships [between historical events] [...] exist only in the mind of the historian reflecting on them' (White, 1978: 94). Ono has rewritten his relationship with Japanese militarism in such a way that complicates the reasons why he became its advocate. Like Suichi, who fought for Japan in the war, he has participated in Japanese militarism and accepts his actions were unfortunate. But he blames others for his involvement. His narrative complicates the extent to which judgements can be made about his life, creating a situation similar to that Christopher Norris condemns in his critique of postmodernism by undermining 'the very concept of historical reason as aimed at a better, more enlightened or accountable version of significant events' (Ishiguro, 1986: 137). Ono's account of his life has made him seem less accountable as a Japanese imperialist.

The ideology that Ono claims he happened into remains in the activities of the younger generation. There can be detected the shades of the older, nationalist Japan beneath the language they use. Although they wish to build a Japan that, in Taro's words, has set 'its sights on the future' (Ishiguro, 1986: 186), they also surreptitiously 'glance back' at the Japan of the previous generation. When Ono dines with Taro, Noriko and Setsuko in 'November, 1949,' Taro earnestly relates the high level of morale at his firm KNC, and concludes that 'provided we do our best, KNC should be a name registered not just all over Japan but all over the world' (Ishiguro, 1986: 184). There are shades of Matsuda's desire for Japanese prominence in the world in Taro's words, who also wished Japan to 'to expand abroad' (Ishiguro, 1986: 174).

Nationalist sentiment is preserved, perhaps, at the level of business. There is a sense in the novel that an industrialised, post-war Japan is not dissimilar from the pre-war, militarist Japan. Once again this is suggested by a view of the landscape. At the end of the novel Ono gazes at a group of businessmen who emerge from an office block where the Migi-Hidari once stood:

when I remember those brightly-lit bars and all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing a little more boisterously perhaps than those young men yesterday, but with the same good-heartedness, I feel a certain nostalgia for the past and the district as it used to be. But to see how our city has been rebuilt, how things have *recovered* so rapidly over the years, fills me with genuine gladness. Our nation, it seems, whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, has now another chance to make a better go of things. One can only wish these young people well. (Ishiguro, 1986: 206 - emphasis added)

In this passage that concludes the novel, an image of the present is transposed upon an image of the past. This suggests that the present preserves certain elements from the past. The effect of the view is to highlight continuity rather than fundamental change. The festive spirit of the floating world remains in the laughter of the businessmen. The rebuilding of the city has not obliterated completely that which has gone before. Ono's use of the word 'recovered' is suitably double-edged. It implies that nationalism may be regaining its health, recovering from its disabling defeat at the end of Second World War. As Bruce King considers, 'is [Ono's] desire to make "a better go of things" reconciliation with the new order or the expectation of a nationalist revival?' (King, 1991a: 208). But recovering can also suggest concealment (as in covering up, re-covering), and Ono's narrative has rendered it impossible to measure the extent of his ardour for nationalism. That has been successfully concealed. He has rewritten history for the purposes of alleviating blame, covering over any secure evidence that testifies to his conscious collaboration. This process is exemplified by the mystery surrounding the disappearance of his paintings. When Ichiro asks to see Ono's work, he replies that '[t]hey're tidied away for the moment' (Ishiguro, 1986: 32). It is not resolved who is responsible for concealing these paintings, although Ono is a prime suspect when we recall his admission that he keeps imperialist paintings: 'somewhere in this house [is] a painting by Kuroda [...] entitled "The Patriotic Spirit" ' (Ishiguro, 1986: 74). This act of concealment acts as a paradigm for the novel. An affinity with Japanese nationalism has been covered over in Ono's rewriting of history, as he seeks to distance himself from an ardent participation in its ideology. But that nationalism is

residual in the ambitions of the younger, business-oriented Japanese, where it is continued by other means. Although the older Japan of the 1930s was in one respect forced to finish by defeat, its aims are being achieved by other means and are far from finished.

A Pale View of Hills and *An Artist of the Floating World* explore a transitional moment in Japanese history, questioning the extent to which the fundamental changes to Japan during the American occupation really eradicated all elements of the Japanese nationalism at a height during the 1930s. They intimate that a younger generation of Japanese disguise the continuation of certain elements of Japanese nationalism behind public repudiations of the previous generation. The Japan of the 1930s may seem the stuff of *ukiyo* - belated, fleeting, insubstantial - but the new Japan is being built upon its remains. By opening a space between himself and a once dominant ideology, Ono, like the younger Japanese, repudiates that which remains residual in post-war Japan, and which is continued by Taro and his contemporaries in the world of business. In particular, *An Artist of the Floating World* hovers ambiguously between two forms of narrative progression, the first ambiguous, the second suggesting an alternative genealogy that explains Ono's activities before the war. As a mode of historiography it is not the 'imaginary elaboration' of Roland Barthes because it does not make all interpretations of the past equally valid. But Ono's strategies of concealment do not firmly establish that 'more enlightened or accountable version of significant events' that Christopher Norris believes fundamental to historiography. The text is caught somewhere in between these positions in its depictions of landscapes that are 'imagined territories', marked by historical incidents yet the products of powerful mediating consciousnesses.

The Remains of the Day: Ishiguro's English journey

Ishiguro's third novel, *The Remains of the Day*, shifts focus from Japan to England. This novel is based upon the memories of Stevens, the butler of Darlington Hall. Once the family seat of Lord Darlington, the hall is now the possession of an American, Mr Farraday. Stevens's narrative records a motoring journey he takes to the south west of England in July 1956. On his journey he remembers his years of service to Lord Darlington before the Second World War, and affords an opportunity to measure the extent to which the England of 1956 has

changed from that of the 1920s and 1930s. As it shuttles between these moments in history, the narrative complicates linear progression in a way that recalls *An Artist of the Floating World*. But the uncertainties that Ono cultivated in the previous novel are not as welcome to Stevens. The gaps in time between each section of Stevens's narrative are shorter than those in *An Artist of the Floating World*, often a night or a couple of hours. We are provided with a much clearer indication of the occasions of the moments Stevens recalls. In 'Day Two - Morning, Salisbury,' the depiction of life at Darlington Hall begins with Stevens remembering the arrival of Miss Kenton, the new housekeeper who plays a significant role in his life. The memories proceed from Darlington's conference of March 1923 to the meeting of the German Ambassador and the British Prime Minister (presumably Chamberlain) at the Hall in 1938. The manner of Stevens's narrative is characterised by a meticulousness that protects against more spontaneous, direct statements, such as the bantering he struggles to master in order to please Mr Farraday. It betrays his anxiety to render more stable accounts of both the past and the present. This is his main difference from Ono. Whereas Ono is engaged partly in cultivating referential uncertainty, I suggest that Stevens fails to find the means to preserve the values of an older age in the present. Stevens's defence of Lord Darlington's co-operation with the Nazis succeeds only if the values he internalised as a servant of the aristocracy still have hegemony after the war. His defence is an attempt to recover a paternalistic model of Englishness in the post-war era. However, his journey through England in July 1956 exposes his version of Englishness to be in ruins. In contrast with Etsuko's and Ono's Japan, in Stevens's England elements from the past struggle to remain. The values that would legitimate his version of history have not been preserved. His definition of Englishness derived from the class he served is brought into conflict with other versions of Englishness he meets on his journey. This results in a crisis of legitimacy. The old certainties that have given meaning to Stevens's life are challenged after the war. The attitude of his new owner, Mr Farraday, intimates that Stevens will end his life employed primarily as a sign of an anachronistic version of Englishness that has become a commodity in the post-war period. A sense of change is more pronounced and certain in this novel, but the anxieties it creates recall Ishiguro's earlier work.

My reading of Stevens's narrative as rehearsing a crisis of legitimacy borrows the

vocabulary of Lyotard's familiar definition of the postmodern condition as an 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv). Stevens's journey forces him to confront an incredulity towards the assumptions concerning the value of Englishness he has held throughout his life. As I demonstrate below, the England through which he journeys is in a state of transience, caught between the old paternalism of the aristocracy and the new consensus politics of the post-war years. Stevens's vocabulary is foregrounded as a strategic attempt to defend an older order from denigration after the war. As the aristocracy are depicted in league with the German fascists, it might seem that the destabilisation of Stevens's language of Englishness is extremely productive. The postmodernist conception of history as 'imaginary elaboration' legislates against an attempt to make truth claims about the conduct of Lord Darlington. It recalls Stephen Slemon's view that 'the extent to which we are able to see history as language [...] is also the extent to which we are able to destabilise history's fixity, its givenness, and open it up to the transformative power of imaginative revision' (Slemon, 1988: 159). The waning legitimacy of Stevens's assumptions, epitomised by his problematic attempt to rewrite history, enables a different view of Englishness to emerge that is a product of the optimism of the immediate post-war period and revises the paternalism of Darlington's vision of England. It is perhaps welcome that Darlington's view of Englishness is discredited, but no alternative version is secured in its place. The overwhelming mood of the characters Stevens encounters on his journey is disillusionment. Emerging from this is a new kind of England that displays some of the features of postmodernity, in particular commodification. In short, *The Remains of the Day* is extremely anxious about the effects for society as a whole if all reality is just a product of perspective, an 'imaginary elaboration'. To make this argument, my reading of the novel proceeds in the following stages. First, I contextualise Stevens's narrative by depicting the moment of his journey as occurring at a time of anxiety and transition. Second, I explore Stevens's model of Englishness and his attempt to defend Lord Darlington. Third, I recognise the threat to Stevens's values voiced by characters he meets in an important scene at the Taylors' cottage in Moscombe. Finally, I outline the disillusionment that enables an emerging postmodernity that is the cause of some disquiet.

An approach to *The Remains of the Day* primarily as a novel about crisis is prompted

by the fact that Stevens's journey occurs in July 1956. This was the month of the Suez crisis when the Egyptian premier Abdul Nasser nationalised the Suez canal, wresting control of the waterway from the economic influence of France and Great Britain. This detail shapes the novel's thematic agenda from the outset because, as Salman Rushdie suggests, 'the Suez débâcle marked the end of a certain kind of Britain whose passing is a subject of [this] novel' (Rushdie, 1991: 246). That Stevens's narrative occurs at a point of transition is reinforced by a number of commentators. Diane B. Kunz begins her study of the crisis by remarking that '[t]he Suez crisis of 1956-1957 remains one of the most interesting episodes in twentieth-century history. The British government and people reluctantly confronted the fact that Britain had slipped from the first rank of powers' (Kunz, 1991: 1). For Arthur Marwick it signifies a 'deep political watershed in postwar history' (Marwick, 1982: 18), separating an emerging Americanised, consumer-based society from the idealism and optimism which characterised the years following the election of Atlee's Labour Government in 1945. Marwick's point seems particularly apposite to *The Remains of the Day*. The presence of Stevens's new American employer suggests that the property and prestige of the British aristocracy are passing into the hands of a new ownership, and I examine the importance of this detail near the end of my discussion of the novel. Marwick's reference to Atlee's Labour Government that held office between 1945 and 1951 is also important, as the novel bears witness to the optimism that some argue characterised the immediate post-war years. Harry Hopkins argues that the Second World War bred a new, vital feeling of democratisation across traditional class divisions which transformed British society. The result was a new consensus that characterised the years following the war as '[s]o much travel, so much experience [...] inevitably brought a new flexibility to many minds' (Hopkins, 1963: 21). Peter Hennessy uses the phrase 'never again' in an attempt to capture the optimism of the years 1945 and 1951, when 'never again would there be war; never again would the British people be housed in slums [...]; never again would mass unemployment blight the lives of millions' (Hennessy, 1992: 2). The new Labour Government elected in July 1945 was obliged to make a new social contract with the population, supplying post-war Britain with better social conditions through the creation of the welfare state based on the Beveridge Report of 1943. Alan Sinfield calls this system 'welfare-capitalism' (Sinfield,

1989: 277), where

the promise of full employment, a health service, universal full-time secondary education, nearly universal pension rights and public responsibility for housing were established. These were the good things of life that, traditionally, the upper classes had secured for themselves. Now the state was proposing to make them available to everyone. All the people were to have a stake in society, an adequate share of its resources as of right. It was an alternative conception of the social order. (Sinfield, 1989: 15)

It seemed that the war had resulted in a fairer society ruled 'by consent, rather than by force' (Sinfield, 1989: 16). I argue below that in *The Remains of the Day* these attitudes are glimpsed when Stevens visits Moscombe, near Tavistock.

In terms of the English aristocracy, the immediate post-war years featured the waning of their influence. David Cannadine records how country estates 'tumbled into the market in the years immediately after 1945, and [...] country houses, town palaces, works of art, and non-agricultural assets were destroyed or disowned on an unprecedented scale' (Cannadine, 1990: 638). Nancy Mitford's famous essay 'The English Aristocracy' published in 1955 reflected the mood:

Divest, divest, is the order of the day. The noblemen used to study a map of his estate to see how it could be enlarged, filling out a corner here, extending a horizon there. Nowadays he has no such ambitions; he would much rather sell than buy. (Mitford, 1965: 167)

Stevens, then, has been a servant to a class in demise during the immediate post-war years. He is also the member of the declining profession of butling. Hopkins notes that 'there were in the Fifties about 150 butlers still employed in private houses in London: a dying race' (Hopkins, 1963: 155n). The world with which Stevens is familiar is vanishing. Indeed, Hopkins's book is particularly interesting as it conveys the mood of this transitory period in his observation that there could still be detected a 'gulf between the Old England that was dying and the New England that was conceived but hardly yet born' (Hopkins, 1963: 123):

[England's] persona-change [could not] be accomplished in a decade. Behind the crisp facades of Festival 'Contemporary' there still appeared, faint but lingering, the grandiose Imperial domes of Wembley [...] [B]eneath the surface, the old John Bull truculence lingered. (Hopkins, 1963: 441-442)

In the *Remains of the Day* there is glimpsed an overlapping of these different Englands - one of the aristocracy, with its country estates and butlers; the other a product of post-war optimism that takes a different approach to the English class system. Neither of these occupies a position of secure legitimacy. On the horizon lurks a third England, where the stately homes of the aristocracy become commodities rather than seats of landed power. On his journey, Stevens endeavours to rediscover the England of a previous generation, one that will confirm the values he has held throughout his life that are akin to the aristocracy whom he served throughout his life. However, the Englands he discovers threaten those values and render his project to rewrite history in order to defend Lord Darlington a complicated task.

In order to outline the three different versions of England glimpsed in the novel, let me borrow an observation made in the conclusion of J.B. Priestley's travels through England in the Autumn of 1933 that are recorded in his *English Journey*. Priestley's depiction of an increasingly industrialised Britain takes in both the English countryside and its industrial areas. It often lingers ambivalently upon the poor living conditions of the working classes, particularly in the north of England, who have been deprived of work by the world-wide depression of the 1930s and advances in technologies of production. Priestley concludes his book by arguing that he has experienced three different types of England on his travels. First, an older England of 'guide-book and quaint highways' (Priestley, 1934: 397); second, the England of depressed heavy industry and the working class; and third, a more provincial and newer England, distinctly American in flavour. Stevens's journey can be understood as intersecting with these three different 'Englands'. He is preoccupied in the main with the first of these Englands, enshrined in the guide-books produced in the 1930s that extol the many fine sights to be seen in the countryside. But he comes into contact with others who, although not members of the industrial workers of the second of Priestley's Englands, are nevertheless associated with the world of work upon which the foundations of welfare-capitalism have been built. Finally, as an employee of Mr Farraday, Stevens returns to Darlington Hall and a new life as a servant of an American that suggests the passing of influence from Britain to America.

Let us proceed with the first of these Englands. Newly arrived from America, Mr Farraday suggests a motoring holiday to Stevens on the premise that '[y]ou fellows, you're

always locked up in these big houses helping out. how do you ever get to see around this beautiful country of yours?' (Ishiguro, 1989: 4). While contemplating an appropriate reply, Stevens's thoughts acknowledge his confidence that he is already fully acquainted with his native country:

those of our profession, although we did not see a great deal of the country in the sense of touring the countryside and visiting picturesque sites, did actually 'see' more of England than most, placed as we were in the houses where the greater ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered. (Ishiguro, 1989: 4)

England is equated with the wealthy visitors to Darlington Hall that Stevens waited upon before the war. Significantly, he does not expect to discover anything new about England on his travels. Instead, he will have a preconceived picture of England confirmed that is derived from a particular social class. This is demonstrated by the fact that Stevens takes as his guide the third volume of 'Mrs Jane Symons's *The Wonder of England* [...] a series running to seven volumes' (Ishiguro, 1989: 9). Mrs Symons's books were written during the 1930s, and she was often a frequent visitor to Lord Darlington's prestigious home.¹ Her books were 'admired in houses up and down the country' (Ishiguro, 1989: 12). Stevens is guided by a map of England written from a place of relative privilege akin to the atmosphere of Darlington Hall where Stevens had most of his experience. He naively assumes that Mrs Symons's book will still be useful as 'I do not imagine German bombs have altered our countryside so significantly' (Ishiguro, 1989: 11). His anticipation of his journey is mediated through the lens of Mrs Symons's version of England:

I had not looked through those volumes for many years, until these recent developments led me to get down from the shelf the Devon and Cornwall volume once more. I studied all over again those marvellous descriptions and illustrations, and you can perhaps understand my growing excitement at the notion that I might now actually undertake a motoring trip myself around that same part of the country. (Ishiguro, 1989: 12)

Stevens's excitement, I suggest, is created because he believes the journey will afford him an opportunity to look again at the England of the great ladies and gentlemen conjured so

¹ The British Library holds no record of this book, so I assume it is Ishiguro's invention. The fact that the guide-book concerns 'wonders', and is in seven volumes, recalls the seven wonders of the world. The suggestion is that England contains all the world's wonders within it, a view that informs perhaps Stevens's expectations of the landscape through which he journeys.

powerfully by the popular Mrs Symons. His journey is intended to reassure Stevens that the England he knows, and the values attached to it, still exist. However, as his journey proceeds it becomes clear that the England familiar to Stevens is unavailable, and is undergoing a process of redefinition.

This has consequences for the language Stevens uses in his narrative. His language betrays an anxiety to fix meaning securely. It attempts to be both meticulous and precise. He often makes a point with care, then takes measures to indicate exactly what he means with additional clauses. One example is his description of the smile he gives to Mr Farraday:

I responded as usual by smiling slightly - sufficient at least to indicate that I was participating in some way with the good humouredness with which he was carrying on - and waited to see if my employer's permission regarding the trip would be forthcoming. (Ishiguro, 1989: 19)

The long subordinate clause that disrupts the flow of the sentence betrays an anxiety on the part of Stevens concerning the ability to convey precisely correct meanings. 'Slightly' does not describe accurately the nature of his smile; more language is required to pinpoint meaning. In short, Stevens's language is circuitous. I make this point to suggest a connection between his precise use of language, and the route that he chooses to take through the English countryside. Both are attempts to keep a certain vocabulary linked to Englishness securely in place. Stevens's route is, as he admits, carefully planned with recourse to his guide-book. He records that his approach to Salisbury avoids almost entirely the major roads: 'the route might have seemed unnecessarily circuitous to some, but then it was one that enabled me to take in a fair number of the sights recommended by Mrs J. Symons in her excellent volumes' (Ishiguro, 1989: 67). Both Stevens's circumlocutions and his circuitous route are an attempt to confine himself to a particular representation of England. His narrative tries to fortify a sophisticated set of relations between a specific vocabulary, a view of the English landscape, and a definition of Englishness. His attempts to experience the wonders of England described by Mrs Symons in her guide book predicate a rehearsal of his values.

But Stevens's intentions are not satisfied. As soon as he begins his journey, there can be detected a fracture between his expectations of England and his encounters with the post-war landscape. He suffers immediate feelings of disquiet as he proceeds:

eventually the surroundings grew unrecognizable and I knew I had gone beyond all previous boundaries. [...] The feeling swept over me that I had truly left Darlington Hall behind, and I must confess I did feel a slight sense of alarm - a sense aggravated by the feeling that I was perhaps not on the correct road at all, but speeding off in totally the wrong direction into a wilderness. (Ishiguro, 1989: 23-24)

Stevens is indeed venturing forth into an England he cannot recognise because it does not match the expectations created in his guide-book. His desire to experience a vision of England as a 'wonder' true to Mrs Jane Symons's guide books becomes quite urgent, and is an attempt to deny that the landscape through which he moves is unrecognisable. Stevens's feelings of alarm are addressed when he stops his car on the road to Salisbury to 'take stock' (Ishiguro, 1989: 25) of his disquieted sentiments. While walking from his car, he is urged by a local man to climb a path from where he 'won't get a better view anywhere in the whole of England' (Ishiguro, 1989: 25). Stevens recalls the cathartic effect the view has on his troubled emotions. It seems to afford him a sight that is recognisable as Mrs Symons's England:

What I saw was principally field upon field rolling off into the far distance. The land rose and fell gently, and the fields were bordered by hedges and trees. There were dots in some of the distant fields which *I assumed* to be sheep. To my right, almost on the horizon, *I thought* I could see the square tower of a church.

It was a fine feeling indeed to be standing up there like that, with the sound of summer all around one and a light breeze on one's face. (Ishiguro, 1989: 26 - emphasis added)

Although he derives a fine feeling from the view, Stevens's description of the view of Salisbury is nevertheless rather anxious. I want to convey the curious tone of Stevens's description, prevalent in the emphasised phrases, by comparing it with J.B. Priestley's view of Salisbury in his *English Journey*. Priestley records how a similar view stirs within him powerful emotions evoked by the vision of the countryside:

The Hampshire whose gilded fields and deep blue shadows were all about me that morning had [a] power of quickening and enriching the mind with associations, now reminding me of the old landscape artists, now of Hazlitt, now of the medieval England that must have looked like this through county after county; and so the journey turned into a most pleasant experience. It reached its peak when we crossed the spur of the Downs, looked into the distant vale and saw, far away in the autumnal haze, the spire of Salisbury Cathedral like a pointed finger, faintly luminous. This is a noble view of England, and Constable himself could not have contrived a better light for it. You have before you a Shakespearean landscape, with shreds of Arden all about.

glimpses of parks of Navarre, and Illyrian distances. So we descended upon Salisbury. (Priestley, 1934: 23)

Priestley makes several interesting associations in this passage. Connections are forged between the English landscape and the great writers and landscape artists motivated by its spirit. The Edenic scene he describes seems to capture an essence of Englishness that resides in the landscape, providing both nobility and the stimulus for great art. The landscape fits harmoniously with its representations. Constable need not add anything to his frame but merely paint what he sees, as the natural light cannot be surpassed by artifice. It is also a timeless vision; the pastoral worlds of Shakespearean romance, the landscape art of the eighteenth-century and the medieval landscapes of England are conjured in one sumptuous, stimulating vision of England. Stevens's vision of a similar scenario has none of the conviction to be found in Priestley's prose. If Priestley asserts a seamlessness between the English landscape and the work of the great artists, who need not supplement their work with artifice, Stevens's depiction is touched up by his own imagination. He 'assumed' that the dots in the distance are sheep, and he 'thought' he saw a church tower on the horizon. Stevens adds to his views these small details to recreate an idealised picture of the English countryside (perhaps the picture perpetuated by Mrs Symons). The view he seeks does not quite exist before his eyes. He is so keen to capture an Edenic vision of the landscape that he wills it into existence. The landscape does not square with his expectations, and requires supplementation. The uncertainties of Stevens's description suggest that an old, aristocratic England is no longer quite there. In these terms, the elaborate mannerisms of Stevens's language can be considered as an attempt to compensate for loss. Its precision attempts to conjure an image of England that, as his description of Salisbury betrays, is no longer fully present.

As Richard Gill notes, '[f]or centuries the social structure of England has been embodied in the very landscape. In shire after shire the manorial pattern took hold, so that even today - despite suburban sprawl and green belts - the eye never loses sight of the age-old contours' (Gill, 1972: 3). The age-old contours Stevens searches for in the landscape also map out the values of the class he has served. He uses the landscape to introduce a set of values derived from his experience of aristocratic life that define the qualities of Englishness. While

reflecting upon the view he experienced of Salisbury, Stevens suggests that the English landscape possesses a definite 'greatness':

the English landscape at its finest - such as I saw it this morning - possesses a quality that the landscapes of other nations, however more superficially dramatic, inevitably fail to possess. It is, I believe, a quality that will mark out the English landscape to any objective observer as the most deeply satisfying in the world, and this quality is probably best summed up by the term 'greatness'. For it is true, when I stood on that high ledge this morning and viewed the land before me, I distinctly felt that rare yet unmistakable feeling - the feeling that one is in the presence of greatness. (Ishiguro, 1989: 28)

Like Priestley, Stevens finds the landscape stirring. His vision summons feelings of national pride and serves to define a model of Englishness. Greatness is also coupled with 'restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout about it' (Ishiguro, 1989: 29). Other landscapes, from Africa for example, display an 'unseemly demonstrativeness' (Ishiguro, 1989: 29) in contrast. It is interesting to observe the transition Stevens makes between defining Englishness with recourse to the landscape, and using the same vocabulary to remember his own work as a butler. It is an attempt to fashion for himself a secure cultural identity. This is demonstrated when Stevens disparages foreigners:

Continental - and by and large the Celts, as you will no doubt agree - are as a race unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion [...] We English have important advantages in that respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman. (Ishiguro, 1989: 43)

By exclaiming '[w]e English', Stevens stages his own feelings of kinship with the class he has served and commends the advantages of his national identity. Understatement, calm, and restraint are favoured over strong emotional outbursts and displays of panic. Stevens subscribes wholeheartedly to these values. He applauds the restraint displayed by his father, a butler employed at Loughborough House, when asked to act as valet to a visiting General. The General was responsible for the death of Stevens's brother Leonard, during an 'irresponsibly commanded' (Ishiguro, 1989: 40) attack in the Southern African War. Leonard had 'died quite needlessly' (Ishiguro, 1989: 40) as a consequence of the General's faults. Yet, Stevens's father conquers his feelings of 'utmost loathing' (Ishiguro, 1989: 41) for the General, and carries out his duties with success. His 'emotional restraint' (Ishiguro, 1989: 43) becomes the fulcrum for

Steven's definition of 'dignity' (Ishiguro, 1989: 42), a term which he believes is a quality possessed by all great butlers. The ability to hide emotional responses behind a mask of professionalism and inhabit the role of butler 'to the utmost [...] is, I say, a matter of dignity' (Ishiguro, 1989: 42-43). Dignity is the fulcrum of Stevens's values, and will suffer reinterpretation by other characters as the novel proceeds.

Stevens develops his definition of Englishness in his memories of Lord Darlington, and in so doing uses it to defend Darlington's conduct between the wars. A veteran of the First World War, Darlington is dissatisfied with the terms of the Versailles treaty of 1919 which, in his view, are harsh and damaging. He aims to use the opportunity of the March 1923 conference to build better international relations between the Great Powers by assembling delegates from France, Germany and the United States. During the 1930s his sympathies lead him into contact with fascism, and he entertains the Nazi Ribbentrop at Darlington Hall. After the War he is condemned as a Nazi, and he dies in solitude as an invalid 'with his good name destroyed forever' (Ishiguro, 1989: 235). Stevens defends Darlington's sympathy for the German Nazis by highlighting Darlington's Englishness. In his version of history, Lord Darlington was motivated by munificence but manipulated by others and cannot be held accountable for his actions. Other people played upon his Englishness and anchored it to an unsavoury end. Stevens remembers that Darlington dismissed two domestic staff, Ruth and Sarah, on the grounds that they are Jewish. He blames this upon 'that brief, entirely insignificant few weeks in the early thirties when Mrs Carolyn Bernet came to wield an unusual influence over his lordship' (Ishiguro, 1989: 145). Similarly, Darlington's close links with Nazi Germany are blamed upon the 'deception' (Ishiguro, 1989: 136) of Herr Ribbentrop. The significance of Darlington's Englishness is foregrounded at the conference of 1923. Darlington condemns the harsh treatment of Germany at Versailles as 'it does us great discredit to treat a defeated foe like this. A complete break with the traditions of this country' (Ishiguro, 1989: 71). Rather, the victors should behave like a 'gentleman' (Ishiguro, 1989: 73) and revise the treaty of Versailles.¹ Darlington has kept a close friendship with Herr Karl-Heinz Bermann, an old foe

¹ Darlington's attitudes are not untypical of many aristocrats of the inter-war years. Many thought the 'terms of the [Versailles] treaty were unjust' (Laver, 1961: 144), particularly those who had fought in the First World War. Richard Griffiths notes that, during the acquisition of British sympathy for the growth of German Nazism, '[o]ne of the strongest cards which the Nazis had to play was the sense of

for whom he had the utmost respect. As he tells Stevens, '[h]e was my enemy [...] but he always behaved like a gentleman' (Ishiguro, 1989: 73). At the conference, Darlington's Englishness is foregrounded. The climax to the conference concerns the speeches of three chief characters: Lord Darlington, the French representative M. Dupont, and an American senator Mr Lewis. Prior to the banquet, Stevens overhears Dupont and Lewis talking in Dupont's room. Lewis is heard to proffer the view that 'M. Dupont was being manipulated by his lordship and other participants at the conference' (Ishiguro, 1989: 95). However, Dupont is angered by Lewis's behaviour, and he uses his speech at the banquet to 'openly condemn any who come here to abuse the hospitality of the host, and to spend his energies solely in trying to sow discontent and suspicion' (Ishiguro, 1989: 100). Mr Lewis's response is revealing, as he criticises the very values Darlington believes should prevail in international relations:

All you decent, well-meaning gentlemen, let me ask you, have you any idea what sort of place the world is becoming all around you? The days when you could act out your noble instincts are over [...] You here in Europe need professionals to run your affairs. If you don't realise that soon you're headed for disaster. (Ishiguro, 1989: 102)

Darlington dismisses Lewis's professionalism as a euphemism for 'getting one's way by cheating and manipulating' (Ishiguro, 1989: 103). But of significance in Lewis's accusation is the phrase 'well-meaning'. Stevens is keen to present attitudes to Darlington at the time as quite benevolent. Similarly, on the eve of war, Stevens records Reginald Cardinal making the same point when he visits Darlington Hall on the night Darlington brings together the British Prime Minister and the German Foreign Minister under his roof:

'His lordship is a gentleman. That's what is at the root of it. He's a gentleman, and he fought a war with the Germans, and it's his instinct to offer generosity and friendship to a defeated foe. It's his instinct. Because he's a gentleman, a true old English gentleman. And you must have seen it Stevens. How could you not have seen it? The way they've used it, manipulated it, turned something fine and noble into something else, something they can use for their own foul ends? You must have seen it, Stevens.' (Ishiguro, 1989: 223)

By dwelling upon a representation of Darlington as well-guided and well-intentioned, Stevens

comradeship felt by those who had fought in the First World War, even on opposing sides' (Griffiths, 1980: 127).

makes it very difficult to fix any blame for Darlington's actions with Darlington himself. Darlington is not at fault, it seems, because he merely adheres to a system of values that he has grown up believing. As Cardinal suggests, those values are not to blame either. They are 'fine and noble' in themselves, despite their exploitation by others. Darlington's Englishness is not at fault in Stevens's narrative. Indeed, I would hazard that Stevens is attempting to defend Lord Darlington by presenting him in his own image. Stevens has spent his life in well-meaning service to an employer who has committed crimes. In his version of events, Darlington too has spent a life in well-meaning service, and has suffered at the hands of those who have received his efforts. Both have been servants. In Stevens's rewriting of history, Stevens and Darlington merge. They subscribe to the same view of Englishness, they perform well-intentioned service, but their efforts ultimately serve a sinister end.

Stevens, then, seems to be rewriting history in a way that recalls Ono's undertaking in *An Artist of the Floating World*. Both narrators fashion a version of history that deflects blame away from characters who stand accused of crimes after the war. But whereas Ono is relatively successful in achieving his task, Stevens is not. This is because the fine and noble version of Englishness to which he subscribes faces a crisis of legitimacy in the post-war period, and without this version his defence of Darlington cannot work. The values that Darlington espoused are in conflict with the consensus politics that emerge after the war, and Stevens is made to entertain a different version of Englishness derived from post-war optimism that threatens the validity of the values that legitimate his, and Lord Darlington's, life. This occurs when Stevens is forced to stay with the Taylors. It is worth reflecting first upon the tensions between aristocratic and consensus models of politics in the 1930s, as these tensions arise during Stevens's sojourn at the Taylors' cottage. Cannadine suggests that the attraction of fascism for many of Britain's aristocrats was fuelled by their disgust of the perceived consequences of democracy in the inter-war years:

Many notables were so distressed by what they saw as the failure of democracy that during the thirties they flirted with extreme forms of authoritarianism. In one guise, this meant Mosely and the British Union of Fascism; in another, it meant admiration for Hitler and the Nazis. (Cannadine, 1990: 502)

Richard Griffiths suggests that the Depression of 1929-1933 highlighted the failures of liberal

democracy in the eyes of many, who looked abroad to Italian and German successes: 'To many of those who observed the situation, it seemed that the old presumptions about the virtues of democracy were being called into question' (Griffiths, 1980: 26). The values of a Feudal England were rekindled as the fascist regimes appeared to be 'recreating in a national setting the benevolent paternalism of the landed estate' (Cannadine, 1990: 547). At the Taylors', Stevens confronts hostility to the vision of England to which Darlington subscribed, one that rejected democracy as 'something for a by-gone era' (Ishiguro, 1989: 198). The encounter is prefaced by a reference to Stevens feeling once more disorientated as he journeys through the countryside. Due to a local fair, Stevens is forced to leave his planned route and find accommodation outside Tavistock. When his car runs out of petrol, he climbs a hill in an attempt to discover his whereabouts, and admits to being

disconcerted by what eventually greeted my eyes. On the other side of the gate a field sloped down very steeply so that it fell out of vision only twenty yards or so in front of me. Beyond the crest of the field, some way off in the distance - perhaps a good mile or so as the crow would fly - was a small village. I could make out through the mist a church steeple, and around it, clusters of dark slated roofs; here and there, wisps of white smoke were rising from chimneys. One has to confess, at that moment, to being overcome by a certain sense of discouragement. (Ishiguro, 1989: 161)

The landscape before Stevens is now vaguely threatening. The clarity of vision that was slightly lacking in his view of Salisbury, requiring the supplementing of the view with imagined detail, deserts him further at this moment. He is unable to follow the slope of the hill with his eyes, and mist and smoke disturb his vision. The accident with the petrol has forced Stevens to stumble through a landscape that, I imagine, is not recorded in Mrs Symons's guide-book. Stevens's clarity of vision as to what constitutes Englishness is also clouded as a consequence of him leaving his planned circuitous route. Stevens prefaced his record of his evening with the Taylors as 'a discomfiting set of events' (Ishiguro, 1989: 180), and it is worth considering why the evening upsets him so much. Once settled in the Taylors' kitchen, the house is visited by a number of local people who seem at first to treat Stevens with much deference and respect. Mr Morgan, declares '[i]t's a privilege to have a gentleman like yourself here in Moscombe, sir' (Ishiguro, 1989: 183), while Mr Anderson adds that it is 'not often the likes of yourself comes through here' (Ishiguro, 1989: 182). Stevens is mistaken for a country gentleman. This recalls

the merging of Stevens and Darlington mentioned above, and suggests that the villagers' criticism of the 'gentlemen' that occurs in the cottage has ramifications for both Stevens and the class he has served. The atmosphere in the cottage becomes strained as a consequence of the villagers' attitudes towards country gentlemen. One villager, Harry Smith, mentions a local gent, Mr Lindsay, with some antipathy as he '[t]hought he was so much better than us, and he took us for fools' (Ishiguro, 1989: 184). Stevens is exposed to a set of opinions he has not met previously that the villagers discuss with him. He confronts the new, democratic spirit of the post-war age which his circuitous route has so far avoided, and suggests the villagers' deference is postured and masks feelings of resentment. The Taylors' guests, in particular Harry Smith, articulate the new conception of social order, and conflict is intimated when their discussion turns to the definition of a gentleman. Stevens offers a familiar definition based on the concept of dignity, the fulcrum of his version of Englishness he has derived from living close to the aristocracy. Harry Smith proffers a view that is more democratic in spirit, and repudiates conventional class boundaries:

' [...] Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity's something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get [...] [T]here's no dignity to be had in being a slave. That's what we fought the war for and that's what we won. We won the right to be free citizens. And it's one of our privileges of being born English that no matter who you are, no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me, sir.' (Ishiguro, 1989: 185-186)

Smith argues that the properties Stevens perceives are definitive of the higher classes are available to all English people. In his references to democratic election he gestures towards the England of the post-war period, built upon the principles of universal suffrage and welfare-capitalism. Smith proposes his right to further such democratic principles because '[s]ome fine lads from this village gave their lives to give us that privilege' (Ishiguro, 1989: 189). Privilege is earned, not inherited; the prize for victory over Hitler is a much more democratic England where the Englishness Stevens perceives as the property of the aristocracy is available to all. This, I presume, is what discomforts Stevens - an opinion of the English gentleman at odds with his own. After recording the occasion, Stevens responds by disparaging Harry Smith as an ordinary person whose views should be discouraged, as there is 'a real limit to how much

ordinary people can learn and know, and to demand that each and every one of them contribute 'strong opinions' to the great debates of the nation cannot, surely, be wise' (Ishiguro, 1989: 194). But his exposure to Smith's views brings to a head a process that has occurred throughout the novel. That is, Stevens's defence of Lord Darlington and his values cannot be mounted with the same confidence in their legitimacy. This is evidenced by the fact that, at the end of the novel, Stevens openly questions his definition of dignity while sat on Weymouth pier. His journey has led to the questioning, not the confirmation, of his values.

In the light of my discussion, it is tempting to read *The Remains of the Day* as depicting a transition from an older England to one of post-war optimism and democracy that rejects the paternalism of the aristocracy. Stevens's version of history fails because the values that would legitimate his defence of Lord Darlington no longer have hegemony. However, the optimism of the immediate post-war years is also depicted as waning, and receives criticism as to its legitimacy. This occurs through the mouth of Dr Carlisle, who offers Stevens a lift to his car the morning after his uncomfortable conversation at the Taylors' cottage. Carlisle reflects both versions of England. The villagers treat him as a gentleman, but he is also a product of welfare-capitalism. He came to Moscombe 'in 'forty nine' (Ishiguro, 1989: 210), presumably just after the creation of the National Health Service. Smith notes that Dr Carlisle is 'for all kinds of little countries going independent' (Ishiguro, 1989: 192), suggesting his enthusiasm for universal suffrage. Yet, when Carlisle accompanies Stevens to his car the following morning, he reflects upon the waning of his optimism for a new kind of England based on socialist principles

'You know, Mr Stevens, when I first came out here, I was a committed socialist. Believed in the best services for all the people and the rest of it [...] Socialism would allow people to believe in dignity. That's what I believed when I came out here. Sorry, you don't want to hear all this rot.' (Ishiguro, 1989: 210)

Dr Carlisle's position reflects the transitional period of the novel's setting. On the one hand he has been enthusiastic for the post-war reforms, and the government's provision of the best services possible for the people. But on the other hand he reflects the older kind of English gentleman, disparaging towards a more democratic England and increasingly disillusioned with the post-war changes. Like Stevens, he too dismisses Harry Smith, calling his opinions 'all

nonsense, of course' (Ishiguro, 1989: 209). Dr Carlisle exemplifies the fact that there is no version of England that dominates the moment of Stevens's journey. The aristocratic idea of England is discredited, but remains perhaps in Dr Carlisle's disillusionment. The new England of welfare-capitalism challenges the old values of the English gentleman, but enthusiasm for it is muted. Old certainties are breaking down and newer ideas have lost their initial appeal.

There is a third version of England that is approaching, one that can be understood as postmodern. Stevens's remaining time as an employee at Darlington Hall will be spent predominantly as a sign of a past representation of Englishness. Farraday's purchase of Darlington Hall is significant for two reasons. First, it points to the transfer of power in Britain from its traditional ruling classes into the hands of America that occurs in the post-war period, as international relations become dominated less by the Great Powers of the inter-war years and more by the Soviet Union and American Superpowers.¹ Second, it results in the transformation of Stevens's role as a butler. He does not mean the same for Mr Farraday as he meant for Lord Darlington. For Darlington, Stevens was an essential part of the running of the house. Mr Farraday regards him as a sign of English tradition. When Stevens denies working for Lord Darlington to Farraday's guests, the Wakefields, Farraday displays his irritation in terms that reveal his attitude towards both Stevens and Darlington Hall:

'I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English home, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're *the real thing*, aren't you? That's what I paid for, isn't that what I have?' (Ishiguro, 1989: 124 - emphasis added)

Farraday's words reveal that he has bought the Hall in an attempt to possess what is perceived as a part of English tradition. English tradition is commodity to be bought and sold. Miss Kenton recognises this when she describes Stevens as '[p]art of the package' (Ishiguro, 1989: 242) that Farraday has bought. Farraday's desire to have 'the real thing' reflects the commodification of tradition about which Umberto Eco has written. Eco argues that there is in America a predilection to take possession of a past that 'must be preserved and celebrated in full-scale authentic copy' (Eco, 1986: 6). He summarises this quest as a search for 'the real thing' (Eco,

¹ In the film of *The Remains of the Day*, this point was made more tellingly by the purchase of the Hall after the war by Mr Lewis (the American politician from the 1923 conference) and not Mr Farraday.

1986: 7). Farraday wants Stevens to be the 'real thing' in terms of image when his guests, such as the Wakefields, visit the Hall. Stevens's future, then, is not really one of 'work, work and more work' (Ishiguro, 1989: 237). Rather, it seems, he will be significant to Farraday only as a sign of an era that is now something of an anachronism. He is expected to play the role of an old English butler when guests visit. At other times, Farraday does not mind conversing with Stevens with a casualness that Lord Darlington lacked. The England that the novel anticipates is a place where 'the culture of the image' (Jameson, 1991: 6) will become dominant, as implied by the purchase of Darlington Hall by Farraday in an attempt to possess a sign of an old England. Stevens is significant for Farraday primarily as a relic from a previous age at the very moment Stevens begins to reject the life he has led so far.

The Remains of the Day occupies an ambivalent position in relation to postmodernism. On the one hand it demonstrates the productiveness of its critique of history by calling attention to the processes of 'imaginary elaboration' that affects the writing of history. It can be read as supporting F.R. Ankersmit's point that the content of historical narratives is always 'derivative of style' (Ankersmit, 1989: 144). Stevens's mannered, meticulous diction belongs to a version of Englishness he wishes to restore, one that will safeguard Lord Darlington from condemnation. But the illegitimacy of Stevens's assumptions of Englishness disqualifies him from recuperating an oppressive, aristocratic ideology. The productiveness of Stevens's failed attempt to rewrite history as he wishes is tempered by the disillusionment with post-war welfare-capitalism. No new values, such as inform the the new spirit of consensus, have been secured to take the place of those Stevens required for his narrative. On the horizon of this transitional moment lurks a vacant postmodernity that will turn the remains of the waning aristocratic order into prestigious commodities. Stevens will end his life as a commodity, acting out an anachronistic version of Englishness for his new American employer. Ultimately, *The Remains of the Day* is caught between the two attitudes towards postmodernism that I outlined briefly at the beginning of the this chapter. It emphasises that history is an act of imaginary elaboration in order to question the stability of Stevens's favoured view of Englishness. Stevens's circumlocutory language aims to keep in place that which - as his description of Salisbury evidenced - no longer exists in quite the same way. But the result of this is a

transience in which no new values are secured, and which betokens a new age where history is turned into a series of signs to be bought and sold. Stevens will end his life as an 'imaginary elaboration' of a social role increasingly redundant in post-war Britain.

I have argued that Ishiguro's fiction yields some interesting contributions to the debate between postmodern and postcolonial attitudes to history. His novels seem caught between contrary positions. On the one hand, their attention to the role of imaginary elaboration in the mediation of historical narratives would seem to support models of history that result from postmodernist critiques. It is impossible to detach the history that is narrated from the concerns of its narrator, and establish an objective truth. However, Ishiguro's fiction also points to the dangers of embracing the provisionality of all history that some postmodernist critics urge. In *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, the usefulness of conceiving of history as an act of imaginary elaboration for recuperating a discredited ideology is emphasised. The ability to rewrite history, rendering all representations of the past provisional, can be a useful tool for the oppressor, and not just the oppressed. In *The Remains of the Day*, the provisionality of the values that underwrite Stevens's defence of Lord Darlington may be productive to a contestation of a certain, class-specific version of Englishness. Yet, the inability to establish alternative values leads to a situation of disillusionment, with nothing to take the place of old certainties other than an emergent postmodernity that preserves the past as a commodified image. Ishiguro's novels suggest that the postmodernist critique of history cannot be avoided. The relationship between his narrators, and the histories they write, demonstrates that history is always strategic and influenced by rhetorical strategies. But the consequences of accepting this model of history are by no means emancipatory. Ishiguro's works fall between these different positions. Their representations of history are characterised by doubleness and indeterminacy. For these reasons, Ishiguro's work is locatable within the postcolonial critique of postmodernism and can be read as coterminous with the views of those who warn against embracing postmodernism too readily due to the damaging consequences it can produce.

Chapter Four:

Salman Rushdie's Errant Historiographies

Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay in June 1947 to a wealthy middle-class Muslim family, a few weeks before India formally achieved independence on August 15th 1947. He moved to England in 1961 to attend Rugby School. In 1965 he proceeded to read History at Cambridge University. After graduating, Rushdie settled in England.¹ Of his novels to date, three are the focus of this chapter.² *Midnight's Children* (1981) engages with the history of India in the final days of colonial rule, and the first decades of Indian independence. *Shame* (1983), fictionalises the fortunes of Pakistan, particularly under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who held office between 1971 and 1978, and the first years of his successor General Zia ul-Haq. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) ranges across both time and place in its depiction of the pain and enabling possibilities of migrancy. In so doing, it realises a model of history that can be read as a culmination of Rushdie's fictional project launched in the previous two texts. These novels are highly visible in criticism of both postmodern and postcolonial fiction. But their treatment in each is not free from problems. My reading of Rushdie's fiction is in part an attempt to negotiate between existing approaches to his work. I will argue that those critics who claim his work as postmodern ignore too readily the historical and political influences that affect his choice of narrative strategies. In so doing, the specificity of the critical historiographies Rushdie constructs remains hidden. In contrast to Ishiguro's work, Rushdie's novels adopt a more positive position as regards postmodernist attitudes to history. But Rushdie's postmodernism requires contextualising historically.

Rarely do accounts of postmodernist fiction ignore Rushdie's novels. Their formal characteristics, eschewing conventional realism in favour of more self-conscious and intertextual narrative modes, have been considered exemplary postmodernist literary

¹ A detailed account of Rushdie's early life is provided by W.J. Weatherby in his book *Salman Rushdie: Sentenced to Death* (Weatherby, 1990: 1-87).

² In addition to the three novels studied in this chapter, Rushdie has also published *Grimus* (1977), and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1991), a novel for children. A collection of short stories, *East, West*, appeared in 1994. He is also the author of *The Jaguar Smile* (1987), an account of a visit to Nicaragua, and a book of essays, *Imaginary Homelands*. At the time of writing Rushdie is about to publish a new novel, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995).

techniques. James Harrison captures the tenor of much criticism in his argument that Rushdie 'has [...] presented the academic world with what seem almost textbook examples of all that postmodernist criticism tells us should be found in any self-respecting contemporary novel' (Harrison, 1990: 399). Of interest to many critics is the problematisation of reference in Rushdie's novels. According to Brian McHale, *Midnight's Children* mixes an accepted reality with apocryphal or fantastic elements in order to 'call into question the reliability of official history. The postmodernists fictionalize history, but by doing so they imply that history is a form of fiction' (McHale, 1987: 96). For Linda Hutcheon, both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are exemplary historiographical metafiction. They imply that 'like fiction, history constructs its object, that events named become facts and thus do and do not retain their status outside language' (Hutcheon, 1990: 78). Alison Lee similarly uses *Midnight's Children* to argue that postmodern British fiction challenges the assumption that an objective history can be established. Accepting Hutcheon's model of historiographical metafiction, Lee reads the novel alongside Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) and Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983) as 'novels in which the question of *how* we know history is thematised' (Lee, 1990: 36). The novel subverts the assumption of a secure border between fiction and history, and ultimately makes a pejorative 'comment on Realist [*sic*] techniques' (Lee, 1990: 50) of fictional representation that assume a secure border between each. Although the work of McHale, Hutcheon and Lee is sensitive to the formal characteristics of Rushdie's fiction, these critics do not connect formal innovation with the specific histories that preoccupy his novels. They choose instead to confine their readings to general inquiries concerning the limits of representation. These are certainly important questions. But such readings are in danger of confining themselves to a more abstract discussion of the ontological status of historical narratives. They do not consider fully the relationship between formal innovation and the historical moment that is the concern of each text. This chapter aims to consider that relationship more adequately.

That said, it is ironical that those who explore Rushdie's representation of specific historical moments tend to explain away his formal exuberance. In his argument that Rushdie 'nevertheless creates structure, cohesion and unity' (Harrison, 1990: 399), James Harrison reads *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* as reflecting Hindu and Muslim views of the world

respectively. Harrison argues that *Midnight's Children* is an attempt to reflect the plurality of Indian culture, which in turn is presented 'to a large extent [as] the product of pluralism in Hinduism [...] in contrast to the exclusive nature of Islam and other monotheisms' (Harrison, 1990: 405). Alternatively, *Shame* betrays a 'singleness of purpose' (Harrison, 1990: 407) that makes it understandable as 'a Muslim novel' (Harrison, 1990: 409). Harrison quests for a stable logic, derived from religious belief, that explains formal innovation and secures a fixed 'world-view' for each text. The result is the positing of a kind of literary communalism in Rushdie's work that is, as I highlight below, at odds with Rushdie's support of a plural, secular model of the nation. In a similar attempt to stabilise representation in Rushdie's work, Shamsul Islam approaches *Shame* as a straightforward political allegory. He argues that the two prominent characters, Iskander Harrapa and Raza Hyder are 'freely based' (Islam, 1988: 129) upon Bhutto and Zia respectively. His synopsis of the text is punctuated with parentheses that convert Rushdie's fictional terms into proper names: 'An agitation against Field Marshall A (Ayub Khan) leads to his replacement by General Shaggy Dog (Yahya Khan) who holds general elections which are swept away by Chairman Iskander Harrapa's popular front (Bhutto's Peoples' Party)' (Islam, 1988: 129). Islam reorganises the action of *Shame* into a form it actually subverts, and misses its negotiation of an effective critical historiography through formal innovation.

I wish to remain alert to the problematisation of reference in Rushdie's fiction that McHale, Hutcheon and Lee skilfully identify. But Rushdie's modes of reference require a critical consideration that pays attention to the particular historical occasions that are the subject of his texts. This chapter, then, proceeds through the following stages. It commences by exploring the relation between form and content in *Midnight's Children* in the light of Rushdie's idea of the Indian nation. My reading of *Shame* focuses upon the theme of translation, and suggests that the narrator's narrative strategies counter the political regime with which the novel is concerned. I conclude with a short consideration of *The Satanic Verses*. This novel, I suggest, explores the relations between the past and the present in its depiction of the pain and possibility of migrancy. Rushdie's novels may be postmodern in their form, but they avoid

some of the damaging consequences of postmodernism by highlighting the inseparability of representation and politics.

Midnight's Children: An idea of the nation

Narrated by Saleem Sinai, *Midnight's Children* engages with the fortunes of India between 1915 and 1978. It touches upon a number of historical occasions that include the massacre in the Jallianwalla Bagh of 1919, the moment of Indian independence on August 15th 1947, the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, and the so-called 'Emergency' proclaimed by Indira Gandhi on June 26th 1975 that lasted until the announcement of the general election of March 21st 1977. The novel is also about the writing of that history, and what is at stake in the narrative form Saleem constructs to portray the fortunes of the nation. As Clement Hawes summarises, Saleem's self-reflective narration, unstable and consciously parodic of existing literary texts, is often taken 'to represent a new, 'de-totalising' way of writing history, specifically the history of India as a modern nation-state' (Hawes, 1993: 147). But *Midnight's Children* goes beyond a generalised calling into question of the referential capacities of historical narratives. Saleem judges the history of India in the twentieth century with recourse to a specific idea of the Indian nation. This idea motivates the narrative's form that can be described as heterogeneous and plural. Saleem's narrative should be understood in the light of the idea of the Indian nation that Rushdie defends in his essays. The form of *Midnight's Children* enshrines the values Saleem uses to judge critically India's fortunes as an independent nation. In *Midnight's Children*, the problems that have confronted post-colonial India are represented as, in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, its attempt to 'step out from the old to the new' (quoted in Ali, 1991: 77). I begin my reading of *Midnight's Children* by considering the idea of the nation that Rushdie supports. I then explore its representation in the novel, by comparing the Midnight Children's Conference with the section of the novel set in the Sundarbans. Finally, I approach Saleem's narrative strategies as a way of redeeming an idea of the nation that has failed to materialise in the years subsequent to Indian independence.

Rushdie's idea of the Indian nation can be approached by considering his use of the metaphor of the crowd. In his essay 'The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987', Rushdie uses the crowd in his criticism of the increased religious extremism in Indian political life:

'My' India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity: ideas to which the ideologies of the communalists are diametrically opposed. To my mind, the defining image of India is the crowd, and the crowd is by its nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once. But the India of the communalists is none of these things. (Rushdie, 1991: 32)

Communalism divides India along lines of religious faith, and legislates against the possibility that Indian subjects can be 'many things at once' by assigning them a fixed identity. For Rushdie, superabundance and heterogeneity are the fundamental principles of his idea of the Indian nation. In his reflections on the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, Rushdie spells out his views starkly by arguing that India 'must base itself firmly on the concept of multiplicity, of plurality and tolerance, of devolution and decentralisation whenever possible. There can be no one way - religious, cultural or linguistic - of being an Indian; let difference reign' (Rushdie, 1991: 44). There are several important influences behind Rushdie's idea of India as a heterogeneous crowd where difference reigns. The first is his sympathy for Jawaharlal Nehru, whose idea of India seems similarly secular and plural, tolerant of religious differences. Tariq Ali argues that 'it was Jawaharlal Nehru, more than any other political leader of the Congress, who fought for secular principles in post-independence India. His triumph was complete, or so he thought, when India adopted a new constitution and declared itself a republic on 26 January 1950' (Ali, 1991: 83). Nehru's constitution included a refusal to enforce a state religion, a commitment to schools that were based upon secular principles, and a guarantee of religious liberty for all Indian subjects (Ali, 1991: 82-83). Rushdie's image of India as a secular, superabundant crowd is correspondent with Nehru's secular model of the nation. Timothy Brennan has noted that the first part of *Midnight's Children* jumps unexpectedly between its second and third chapters from Amritsar in 1919 ('Mercurochrome') to Agra in 1942 ('Hit-the-spittoon'). Brennan is surprised that '[n]o-one has seemed to notice that the very staple of a major branch of Indo-English historical fiction, Gandhi's National Movement, is impertinently excised from the narrative outright [...] without so much as a passing comment! Thus, the story

of Indian nationalism is erased from the book that documents its sad outcome' (Brennan, 1989: 84). I suggest that the excision of Gandhi's activities in the 1920s and 1930s registers Rushdie's distance from Gandhi's view of India and his favouring of Nehru's model, one that rejected Gandhi's views concerning village life and Hindu values.¹ The fate of Nehru's model of a secular, plural India preoccupies much of *Midnight's Children*.²

Another important influence that attracts Rushdie to the multiplicity of the crowd is his position as a migrant writer. In an interview with John Haffenden in 1984, Rushdie argued that his experience of moving from India to England, and his occasional visits to see his family in Pakistan, had bereft him of a sense of belonging to a single nation. 'I don't define myself by nationality - my passport doesn't tell me who I am. I define myself by friends, political affinity, groupings I feel at home in . . . and of course writing. I enjoy having access to three different countries, and I don't see that I need to choose' (Haffenden, 1985: 260-261). If the crowd reflects the plurality of a secular Indian state, I suggest it is also a product of Rushdie's migrancy between different cultures. The superabundance of the crowd attracts Rushdie because it accommodates his mobile position as a writer who self-consciously incorporates elements derived from different cultures in his work. As I noted in the previous chapter, Rushdie's view of India is affected by his position as a novelist writing about India from afar. His idea of India emphasises heterogeneity and tolerance, and is flexible enough to accommodate his self-conscious displacement from India. In the crowd, Rushdie's displacement from India would not be an aberration. His particular position as a migrant who left India would not make him less of an Indian, if there is no template of an authentic Indian against which one's 'Indian-ness' is measured. If Rushdie's image of India as a crowd is

¹ Tariq Ali's gripping account of the fortunes of the Nehrus and the Gandhis records Nehru's frustration with some of Gandhi's views resulting from his Hindu faith. Ali notes two points of contention: Gandhi's dream of an India 'without machines and with a non-industrial village as a central unit' (Ali, 1991: 42), and his views on the impropriety of sexual relations for purposes other than progeny (Ali, 1991: 75). Interestingly, Rushdie was aggrieved by Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* partly because it portrayed Nehru as Gandhi's disciple. Rushdie is quick to assert that '[t]hey were equals, and they argued fiercely' (Rushdie, 1991: 104).

² The suggestion that Nehru is an important influence on Rushdie's idea of the nation is supported by the similarities between Nehru and Saleem's grandfather, Aadam Aziz. Dr Aziz is the first character Saleem introduces, and serves as the novel's point of departure. As Neil Ten Kortenaar has recently pointed out, 'Aadam Aziz resembles Nehru in significant ways: both are from Kashmiri families; both have been educated in Europe, have lost the faith of their fathers, and uphold a secular ideal; and both were at Amritsar at the time of the massacre' (Kortenaar, 1995: 48).

indebted to Nehru, it is also an attempt to construct a model of nation in Rushdie's own image. The plurality of cultures Rushdie refuses to choose between is mirrored by the superabundant crowd where difference reigns. Furthermore, Rushdie is from Bombay, and he writes about his place of birth as characterised by heterogeneity. 'Bombay is a city built by foreigners upon reclaimed land' (Rushdie, 1991: 10). He remembers that during his childhood in Bombay 'a certain kind of England' (Rushdie, 1991: 18) was always present, conjured by the cricket matches he listened to on the radio and the children's stories he read. For Rushdie, Bombay has always been a place of cultural heterogeneity, and his metaphor of the crowd also captures some of the superabundance of the city of his birth.

For these reasons it is wise to heed Ahmad Aijaz's warning against elevating writers like Rushdie to 'the lonely splendour of a representative' (Aijaz, 1992: 98) in discussions of postcolonial literature. Rushdie's displaced relations with India are more particular than typical, and directly affect his ideal of the nation. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies have criticised Rushdie's disdain for communal divisions for dismissing too quickly the importance of 'cultural identity and survival' (Sardar and Davies, 1990: 32) in an increasingly westernised world:

His continual references to communalism never lead [Rushdie] to consider, for example, that communalism is taken as such a blight because it so directly contradicts the ethos of the unitary nation-state, which could be the limitation and failing of the nation-state, not communalism. (Sardar and Davies, 1990: 32)

It is beyond the scope of my discussion to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of communalist divisions and the secular nation. But the point that Sardar and Davies make is an important reminder that Rushdie's preferred India is a product of his position as a writer. Rushdie rejects concepts that others feel are crucial to the survival of cultures in the post-colonial period. Their point also reveals a certain idealism in Rushdie's use of the the crowd. The heterogeneity of the crowd lacks a definitive structure and tends perhaps towards anarchy and chaos. As Benedict Anderson argues, the nation is primarily an 'imagined' place that requires the manufacture of a sense of unity (Anderson, 1983: 41-43). The idea of the nation requires strategies that define the limits of a community. The metaphor of the crowd is

particularly tense as an idea of the superabundant nation, because it carries within itself the means of its own subversion. Superabundance threatens the sense of unity that stabilises the borders of imagined communities. In *Midnight's Children* we can notice the tendency towards chaos conflicting with the assertion of strict control by contrasting two of the fantastic elements of Saleem's narrative: the Midnight Children's Conference and the trip to the Sundarbans.

The idea of the Indian nation as accommodating superabundance and heterogeneity is encapsulated in the Midnight Children who are born in the first hour of Indian independence. The children possess a variety of magic powers, and become conscious of each other through Saleem's telepathic capability. They suggest the possibility of a new India, one where the chance exists to lay to rest the intolerance of difference. As Saleem notes, it as if 'history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant [of independence], the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time' (Rushdie, 1981: 195). The Midnight Children's Conference is primarily a meeting place, disorganised and without form. Its apparent formlessness is significant. Saleem recalls how '[w]e were as motley, as raucous, as undisciplined as any bunch of five hundred and eighty-one ten year olds' (Rushdie, 1981: 227). The impression is of a superabundant crowd of voices devoid of a controlling structure. Yet the chaos of the crowd unsettles Saleem, who attempts to impose some structure upon proceedings. Emerging here is the contradiction at the heart of the crowd as an idea of the nation. Superabundance must be contained if the nation is to have structure and limits. Saleem is 'not immune to the lure of leadership' (Rushdie, 1981: 227). His quest for centrality takes on an uncomfortable aspect when Parvati-the-witch argues that Saleem should be considered as their chief. Saleem responds: 'No, never mind chief, just think of me as a . . . big brother, maybe. Yes, we're a family, of a kind. I'm just the oldest, me' (Rushdie, 1981: 228). Unwittingly perhaps, Saleem's words recall the strictly orderly world of George Orwell's *1984* (1948). Saleem's attempt to impose structure upon the conference is contested. His initial view that the Children were organised naturally into a hierarchy, as their abilities declined the further their moment of birth was from the stroke of independence, is contested: 'Whatdoyoumeanhowcanyousay,' they chorused [...] 'Who says it's better to do one

thing or another? And, 'Can you fly? I can fly!' ' (Rushdie, 1981: 227). Instead, he comes to accept that their plurality defies structure:

For the sake of their privacy, I am refusing to distinguish the voices from one another; and for other reasons. For one thing, my narrative could not cope with five hundred and eighty-one fully-rounded personalities; for another, the children, despite their wondrously discrete and varied gifts, remained, to my mind, a sort of many-headed monster, speaking in the myriad tongues of Babel; they were the very essence of multiplicity, and I see no point dividing them now. (Rushdie, 1981: 229)

Saleem has used the phrase 'many-headed monster' before, when describing the 'many-headed monster of the crowd' (Rushdie, 1981: 115) that throngs Cobra Causeway in Bombay twenty-seven minutes before Saleem is born. The phrase is E.M. Forsters's famous description of India, and its repetition in the novel brings together the crowd, an image of the nation, and the Midnight Children's Conference. As an essence of multiplicity, the children encapsulate the promise of a new model of India where difference reigns.

Saleem's reluctance to divide the crowd in retrospect is an important political act. The fate of the conference is indeed one of division, where the multiplicity of the conference becomes calibrated along divisions of class, religion and gender. Saleem's refusal to make divisions is a way of keeping the ideal of the heterogeneous nation buoyant. The conference promises the possibility of stepping from the old into the new, but in practice older divisions cannot be abandoned. It disintegrates into a 'hundred squalling rows' (Rushdie, 1981: 255), as a variety of social and racial prejudices are exacerbated by the children. Saleem notes how the 'prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over [the children's] minds' (Rushdie, 1981: 254). The possibilities promised by the Conference are thwarted by the perpetuation of the prejudices of an older generation that congeal into familiar disagreements between diverse cultural groups. Saleem had noted in the early days of the Conference that '[n]owhere, in the thoughts of the Conference, could I find anything as new as ourselves' (Rushdie, 1981: 229). The Conference's failure is grounded in the continuing of past conflicts in the post-colonial era. Saleem's recognition of its failure is expressed in terms of newness, as he impresses upon the children that 'only by being other, by being new, can we fulfil the promise of our birth' (Rushdie, 1981: 255). His words gesture towards a space promised by the Conference, one that

accommodates heterogeneity and plurality, but ultimately remains beyond its reach. That space shares some of the properties of the symbol of The Great World in J.G. Farrell's *The Singapore Grip*. It also encapsulates the promise of accommodating difference, the transformation of entrenched attitudes and the emergence of something new. The promise of a space of superabundance and difference is thwarted in *Midnight's Children* by the re-emergence of past attitudes in the present:

Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian 'blackies'; there were religious rivalries; and class entered our councils. The rich children turned up their noses at being in such lowly company; Brahmins began to feel uneasy at permitting even their thoughts to touch the thoughts of untouchables; while, among the low-born, the pressures of poverty and Communism were becoming evident (Rushdie, 1981: 254-255)

Through the Midnight Children's Conference, post-colonial India is portrayed as having missed an opportunity to discard the communalist divisions of the past.

The thwarted opportunity represented by the Midnight Children's Conference is powerfully expressed in the novel's third part, during Saleem's encounter with the Sundarbans. The events in the Sundarbans are not often discussed in existing criticism of *Midnight's Children*. I suggest one way to approach this part of the novel is to read it as travestying the ideals of the superabundance, heterogeneity and newness that inform Rushdie's ideal of the secular nation. In the Sundarbans, we meet a grotesque parody of these ideals. The occasion of Saleem's travels into the Sundarbans is 1971, the year that the East Wing of Pakistan declared itself Bangladesh. Temporarily without his memory, Saleem works as a tracker for CUTIA, a unit of the Pakistani army. With three other Pakistani soldiers - Ayooba Baloch, Farooq Rashid, and Shaheed Dar - Saleem witnesses the disturbing violence in Dacca perpetrated by Pakistani troops attempting to stop the secession of Bangladesh. The journey to the Sundarbans is a result of nationalist violence created by competing claims to disputed territory. The violence is a product of nations in turmoil and coming apart, and unable to accommodate difference and plurality. Before flying to Dacca, Ayooba jokes about the inability of the Indian troops to resist the Pakistani forces for reasons of religion: 'What weaklings, yara, those Hindus!

Vegetarians all! [...] how are they going to beat beefy types like us?' (Rushdie, 1981: 347). Ayoooba conceives of the Pakistani and Indian nations as the homelands of Muslims and Hindus respectively, a view at odds with the image of the plural nation. The characters' experiences in the Sundarbans demonstrate that embracing a version of the nation that does not accommodate difference disqualifies the possibility from the stepping from the old to the new. Saleem attempts to escape the violence around him by leading his unit into the jungles of the Sundarbans. It is a place of 'historyless anonymity' (Rushdie, 1981: 260) which Saleem hopes is out of reach of the tensions in the outside world. But the characters' experiences in the Sundarbans suggests that they, like the *Midnight Children*, cannot escape the grip of the past. They cannot break free from their past and are condemned to encounter it in ghostly form. Ayoooba is haunted by the spectre of a peasant he has shot, and loses the use of his gun arm. He is later visited by images of his mother who metamorphoses into a monkey. Farooq sees a vision of his brother running through the forest, and becomes convinced that his father has died. Shaheed is also visited by a monkey, who, he considers, resembles his father. Through a serpent's bite, Saleem regains the memory he lost during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. For each, the past will not relinquish its hold on the present.

The characters' various encounters with their past can be read as an allegory of the nation. The partitioned Indian subcontinent similarly cannot make a transition from the old to the new. Older conflicts still have a grip upon prejudices and disputes in the present, locking nations inside the repetition of old communal conflicts. If the *Midnight Children's* Conference suggested the promise of a new future for the nation that exorcised the prejudices of the past, I suggest the experience of the Sundarbans represents the impossibility of producing a new kind of national reality from old antagonisms. The result of the journey into the Sundarbans is the disqualification of a space that might accommodate the plurality Rushdie believes is the defining feature of the Indian secular nation. This point in particular is forcefully made at the close of the chapter when Saleem encounters some old friends in a field near Dacca. He comes across a curious pyramid in which he spies the mutilated bodies of his old schoolfriends, Eyeslice, Hairoil and Sonny Ibrahim:

There was a small pyramid in the middle of the field. Ants were crawling over it, but it was not an anthill. The pyramid had six feet and three heads and, in between, a jumbled area composed of bits of torso, scraps of uniforms, lengths of intestine and glimpses of shattered bones. The pyramid was alive. One of its three heads had a blind left eye, the legacy of a childhood argument. Another had hair that was thickly plastered down with hair oil. The third head was the oddest: it had deep hollows where the temples should have been, hollows that could have been made by a gynaecologist's forceps which had held it too tightly at birth . . . it was this third head which spoke to the buddha [Saleem]:

'Hullo man,' it said, 'What the hell are you here for?' (Rushdie, 1981: 373)

The pyramid is a grotesque travesty of the 'many-headed monster' of the Midnight Children's Conference. The only possibility of heterogeneity is this morbid commingling. It is also a macabre manifestation of hybridity, a travesty of the multiple self. The bloody pyramid infers the damaging and violent consequences of dividing the crowd, forging unity, just as the conflict over Bangladesh articulates divisions and places borders between people. As far as Shaheed is concerned, Eyeslice, Hairoil and Sonny Ibrahim are just 'enemy soldiers' (Rushdie, 1981: 271), a common foe, and he accuses Saleem of being a traitor by conversing with them. The pyramid also contributes to the theme of being locked inside the repetition of past, and the impossibility of moving from the old to the new. It recalls Kipling's poem 'The Grave of the Hundred Head'. Kipling's poem tells of the revenge taken by the men of the First Shikaris, under the command of Subadar Prag Tewarri, for the murder of Lieutenant Eshmitt Sahib by the Burmans. The revenge involves the merciless decapitation of fifty Burmans. A mound is made from their heads:

They made a pile of their trophies,
 High as a tall man's chin,
 Head upon head distorted,
 Set in a sightless grin,
 Anger and pain and terror
 Stamped on the smoke-scorched skin. (Kipling, 1994: 58)

Kipling's poem depicts a many-headed monster that is a result of violence. The pyramid composed of Saleem's childhood friends resembles Kipling's image. The pyramid suggests that the many-headed monster of post-colonial India is not the heterogeneity of the superabundant crowd but the mutilations caused by nationalist conflict. As the echo of Kipling's poem insinuates, the Sundarbans is a place where the past repeats itself, disqualifying the possibility of reaching a space beyond older divisions. The image of the gruesome pyramid suggests the

price to be paid for dividing the crowd along communalist lines. The version of history produced by *Midnight's Children* condemns post-colonial India for failing to accommodate the plurality and tolerance epitomised by the crowd.

However, the failure of the nation to step beyond the divisions of the old to a new, superabundant space does not invalidate support for the superabundant nation. Its idea is preserved at the level of narrative form. As a narrator, Saleem willingly confronts the challenge of newness. Geoffrey Bennington describes all narratives that attempt to create something new as simultaneously solemn and frivolous:

Any piece of writing, in so far as it has the ambition of saying something new, aspires to the sternness of legislation (and therefore, happily, inherits the levity and anxiety of the charlatan to lighten the solemnity of the law). (Bennington, 1994: 2-3)

We have seen how *Midnight's Children* adopts the sternness of legislation through its depiction of India's failure to realise the superabundance and plurality encapsulated by the crowd. But the tenor of Saleem's narrative must not be passed over. As a narrator, he displays the levity of a charlatan. He refracts the sober judgements of the nation through an exuberant narrative style. His spirited narrative strategies counterpoint the condemnation of post-colonial India, and check the pessimism of the novel's depiction of the fortunes of the nation. His statements are often contradicted, and he stretches our incredulity in the fantastic scenarios he defends fiercely as absolutely true. The energy of his jocund narrative has purpose. If the history of the nation is one of failed promise and missed opportunity, the idea of the nation based upon the image of the superabundant crowd is kept alive at the level of narrative form. Saleem's narrative certainly can be contextualised in terms of the postmodernist critique of representation. He interrupts his narrative frequently, and admits he is 'like an incompetent puppeteer' (Rushdie, 1981: 65) who fails to hide his role in creating the illusion of his tale. His narrative calls attention to the provisionality of all history by exposing its mediation through a subjective consciousness. But Saleem is deliberately casting doubt upon the reliability of his narrative for a more specific purpose, one linked to the idea of the nation. This is what postmodernist readings of *Midnight's Children* miss. The form of Saleem's narrative is influenced by Rushdie's ideal of India as a place of plurality, tolerance and multiplicity.

Saleem is faced with a problem. On the one hand his narrative leans toward a representation of post-colonial India as a failed attempt to step from the old to the new. But on the other, he seeks to avoid positing this version of history as authoritative. To produce just one version of history would forgo the principles of heterogeneity and superabundance that are important values in the novel. The authority of Saleem's narrative is questioned primarily for this reason. Saleem breaks the frame of his narrative to question the stability of his version of events. An example concerns his realisation that his narrative might contain a mistake:

Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time. (Rushdie, 1981: 166)

Later Saleem also admits to remembering that the election of 1957 occurred before his tenth birthday, and not afterwards as he had previously claimed. Saleem's public announcement of these errors invites the reader to approach his story as fallible, only one possible version of events. His judgements are presented as the product of a subjective consciousness rather than universal truth. As Saleem tells Padma, memory 'creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human ever trusts someone else's version more than his own' (Rushdie, 1981: 166). Saleem's attention to heterogeneity has a particular inflection in the context of the secular nation. His narrative is in one sense a literary crowd, the product of many other different narratives from which Saleem freely borrows. Critics of *Midnight's Children* have often noted its parody of existing literary texts. These texts include Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.¹ The many intertexts for the Saleem's narrative enable it to be considered as hybrid, a product of the commingling of several different stories. Saleem constructs a narrative that is both partial to his own perspective, but is not wholly his

¹ There is much published work on the intertexts of *Midnight's Children*. M. Keith Booker argues that *Tristram Shandy* inspires much of Rushdie's fictional technique (Booker, 1990: 977), while Clement Hawes argues that Rushdie uses Sterne's text as a way of visiting and examining the historical emergence of the novel's conventions in the latter part of the eighteenth century, specifically because the birth of the novel is implicated within the emergence of colonial discourses (Hawes, 1993). Rudolf Bader has pointed out formal references to *The Tin Drum* (Bader, 1984), while Patricia Merivale has considered in detail the purpose of Rushdie's intertextual references to Grass's novel (Merivale, 1990). Jean-Pierre Durix situates the novel in relation to Marquez's work in his brief discussion of Rushdie's use of magical realism (Durix, 1985: 57).

own creation. We are reading his version of events, but that version is derived in part from many other narratives.

Saleem has to provide coherence for his narrative without sacrificing plurality. This is achieved by using recurring leitmotifs as a way of structuring the narrative. Selected objects acquire a variety of associations as the novel proceeds. Their significance is never fixed. Rather, they acquire a multiplicity of meanings that are mutable and mobile. Examples include the perforated sheet, the image of a pointing finger and a silver spittoon. Consider the example of the pointing finger. Just prior to the Amritsar massacre narrated in 'Mercurochrome', Brigadier Dodson's car collides with a spittoon which spills its contents to form 'a red hand in the dust of the street [...] point[ing] accusingly at the retreating power of the Raj' (Rushdie, 1981: 44). Above Saleem's childhood bed hangs a painting of the young Walter Raleigh sat before a fisherman who points to the horizon. Later in the novel, Saleem suffers the tip of his finger to be lost in a fight with Glandy Keith and Fat Pierce. This emergency prompts the revelation that Saleem is not Ahmed and Amina's natural child, as the blood Saleem spills does not match the blood groups of his parents. At each point in the narrative the finger fulfils a different function. In the first example the finger is an image which - in its blood-like appearance - appears to anticipate the British massacre of Indian protesters at Amritsar. With the second example, that of the painting, Saleem muses upon the possible meanings of the pointing finger. It perhaps points to Bombay's 'dispossessed' (Rushdie, 1981: 123) which lie beyond the comforts of the Methwold estate, or it could be 'a finger of warning, its purpose to draw attention to itself' (Rushdie, 1981: 123). The removal of Saleem's finger in 'Alpha and Omega' acts structurally as a crucial plot device, setting into effect a chain of events with consequences upon the houses of both Ahmed and Amina Sinai and Saleem's uncle, Hanif Aziz. The significance of the finger never acquires a final, secure meaning. As a sign, the finger is mobile and multiple, devoid of a final signified.

The leitmotifs keep possible the 'many stories' (Rushdie, 1981: 9) that constitute Saleem's version of history. He is frustrated by Padma's demands that he confine himself to 'the narrow one-dimensionality of a straight line' (Rushdie, 1981: 150) and tell a sequential narrative. The plurality of meanings that are attached to the leitmotifs legislate against the

production of 'narrow one-dimensionality'. Saleem's treatment of linear narratives as 'narrow' suggests his conviction that linear narratives cannot accommodate a history of the Indian nation. In her discussion of *Midnight's Children*, Aruna Srivastava argues that a linear, chronological view of history is part of the ideological framework of British epistemology, and has been 'passed on by the ruling British and [is] now part of the Indian national consciousness' (Srivastava, 1989: 63). Saleem 'wrestles with a chronological view of history' (Srivastava, 1989: 63) in an attempt to disturb such imperialist ideology. Conventional, linear models of narrative seem ill-equipped to accommodate the multiple stories he wishes to narrate, and Saleem expends much energy in the early stages of the novel breaking the rules of linear narrative. Many apparent beginnings, which establish traits of character and relationships are undercut and revealed to be false. Naseem Aziz is initially depicted by Saleem as a modest and gentle young woman whose pre-marital illnesses are blamed on her 'soft living' (Rushdie, 1981: 24) in the house of her father, Ghani the landowner. But as the text jumps from Amritsar in 1919 to Agra in 1942, Naseem metamorphoses into the formidable Reverend Mother, shedding one identity for another. In a similar fashion, her daughter Mumtaz Aziz suffers a false start in her married life, as her first husband, Nadir Khan, divorces her after only two years. Mumtaz takes a new husband, Ahmed Sinai (also a divorcée), and a new name, Amina. This recurring process seems epitomised by the fortunes of Mian Abdullah and the Free Islamic Convention which gain Aadam Aziz's sympathies in the 1940s:

Mian Abdullah was a false start for a lot of optimistic people: his assistant (whose name could not be spoken in my father's house) was my mother's wrong turn. But those were the years of the drought; many crops planted at the time ended up by coming to nothing. (Rushdie, 1981: 64)

This quotation encapsulates the rhythm of the novel's first part. Beginnings are suggested, then cancelled. As well as complicating his narrative with a series of false starts, Saleem also problematises resolution. As Nancy E. Batty argues, Saleem punctuates his narrative with short passages which act in a similar way to the cinematic device of the 'trailer,' previewing and partially disclosing later conclusions. These trailers act as 'tantalising teasers which anticipate events to come' (Batty: 1987: 57). For example, we know as early as the novel's eleventh

chapter that Saleem's mother, Amina, will die in Pakistan, an event that occurs in the novel's twenty-third chapter.

But it would be wrong to celebrate Saleem as successfully constructing a narrative form commensurate with Rushdie's idea of the nation. Rushdie also points to the dangers of his version of writing history. This leads to a critique of Saleem's innovative narrative strategies that postmodernist critics are quick to celebrate. Saleem's experiments with form bring disturbing consequences. When he decides to betray the adulterous relationship between Lila Sabarmati and Homi Catrack to Commander Sabarmati, he chooses to send a message to the Commander using words cut from newspaper headlines. The headlines record a series of events in Indian political affairs, such as 'GOAN LIBERATION COMMITTEE LAUNCHES SATYAGRAHA CAMPAIGN' (Rushdie, 1981: 259) and 'NEHRU CONSIDERS RESIGNATION AT CONGRESS ASSEMBLY' (Rushdie, 1981: 259). Saleem calls this 'my first attempt at rearranging history' (Rushdie, 1981: 260). In his review of the novel in the *TLS*, Valentine Cunningham proposed that Saleem's strategy was indicative of the novel's wider purpose of 'cutting up history' (Cunningham, 1981: 535). Both Saleem and Rushdie were finding their own voice by cutting up the official records of the past. Yet, Rushdie is careful to demonstrate the dangers of Saleem's strategy, while exposing such a freedom with historical records as a technique of subversive agents. As well as prompting the murder of Homi Catrack at the hand of Commander Sabarmati, Saleem's note finds its precursor in the actions of the infamous Ravana gang who terrorise Ahmed Sinai and the business community of Old Delhi. The gang send warnings to Delhi's godown owners advising them to pay protection money written 'with words cut out of newspapers' (Rushdie, 1981: 72). Also, when Saleem learns of the death of his Uncle Mustapha while staying in the magicians' ghetto and senses his fate at the mercy of Indira Gandhi's power, the news is brought to him by fragments of 'wind-blown newspapers' (Rushdie, 1981: 427). Dieter Riemenschneider's comments check the optimism of Cunningham's views when he notes that the cutting up of history 'can be bent to serve subjective and individual purposes' (Riemenschneider, 1984: 63). Saleem's innovative attempts at rewriting history are not immune from appropriation. This critique of the rewriting of history seems coterminous with Ishiguro's concerns that I explored in the previous chapter. It also

suggests that Rushdie's seemingly positive attitude concerning the rewriting of history is not as stable as some critics assume. The destructive consequences of Saleem's innovations hinder his narrative from being considered a complete success. It is not necessarily the best way of bearing witness to the fortunes of India. The fallibility of Saleem's narrative implies that he has not realised the perfect way of telling his story. Other modes of representation might be more suitable.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair has argued that '[t]heir involvement with history ultimately destroys Rushdie's protagonists but not before they have raised fundamental doubts in readers' minds about their own historical certainties' (Nair, 1989: 229). Saleem's narrative has kept alive the values of plurality and heterogeneity. With recourse to leitmotifs, he has discovered a narrative form that reflects the heterogeneity of the nation and provides a loosely coherent structure. He is annihilated because the type of crowd that India has become is incommensurate with the idea of the nation enshrined in his narrative strategies. *Midnight's Children* engenders a critical history in its relation between form and content. The novel conveys the failure of an idea of the nation through the fortunes of the Midnight Children's Conference. But it defends that idea at the same time by creating a form that preserves its values of superabundance and difference. Saleem calls attention to his narrative as an act of preservation by comparing it with the jars of chutney that are made in the factory where he writes. '[B]y day amongst the pickle-vats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving' (Rushdie, 1981: 38). Saleem is preserving the idea of India as a plural crowd in the very form of his narrative. As such, Rushdie lays himself open to accusations of Utopianism. Kumkum Sangari has suggested that he 'appears at times to grasp Indianess as if it were a torrent of religious, class, and regional diversity rather than a complex articulation of cultural difference, contradiction, and political use that can scarcely be idealised' (Sangari, 1990: 239). Rushdie's idea of the Indian nation is perhaps rather idealistic. But the political efficacy of the novel is preserved by the enabling of critique at the level of form. Saleem's formal aspirations do not square with the fortunes of the nation. The disjunction between the two opens a critical distance across which judgements are made. Saleem's narrative strategies may seem characteristically postmodern. They are self-conscious, mobile, and effect the breaking of narrative illusion. But

they reach beyond a deconstruction of objective history to enable a critical historiography that takes India to task for failing to step from the old into the new. The specific critical thrust of his narrative is missed by those who read *Midnight's Children* purely as a novel about the textuality of history.

***Shame*: Translation as critical historiography**

My reading of *Midnight's Children* called attention to the importance of form in redeeming an idea of the nation. The question of form is also important in *Shame*. Of interest in particular are the methods Rushdie utilises in representing a 'not quite' Pakistan (Rushdie, 1983: 27). *Shame* enables a critique of post-colonial Pakistan through the narrative strategies used to represent its fortunes. The strategies that will be the focus of my discussion are various forms of translation. I argue that Rushdie explores the possibility of translation as a means of critique. Translation is mobilised to challenge the unitary language used by those in power to justify their authority, and as a mode of unearthing other voices critical of that authority.

Let us proceed by assembling a set of critical tools that will assist my approach to the function of translation in *Shame*. Sara Suleri provides an apt starting point in her book *Meatless Days* in which she articulates the experiences and memories of her life spent chiefly between three countries: England, Pakistan, and the United States. At one level, it is an account of migrancies: the migrancy of Suleri's father from India to London, and then to Pakistan; of Suleri's mother from Wales to Pakistan; of her sister Tillat to Kuwait; and of Suleri's arrival in New Haven. Suleri usefully approaches the issue of translation in the context of her migrancy. The many places where Suleri has lived are reflected in her command of different languages. Towards the end of her narrative, she attempts to convey what it is like to 'live between two languages' (Suleri, 1989: 177), specifically English and Urdu:

Coming second to me, Urdu opens in my mind a passageway between the sea of possibility and what I cannot say in English: when those waters part, they seem to promise some solidity of surface, but then like speech they glide away to reconfirm the brigandry of utterance. (Suleri, 1989: 177)

The density of the passage above contains a set of concerns important to the relationship between migrancy and translation. First, Suleri recognises that languages are not equivalent.

One language seems to open possibilities of expression which another forecloses. The ability to traverse languages in search of such possibilities promises a passage - a mobility - to a solid ground where promised expression can be realised. The biblical overtones intimated in the image of a passage through the sea keeps language and migrancy intertwined; Moses parted the Red Sea to allow the Israelites safe passage to their promised land. But the passage promised by translation is a chimera. An attempt to open a passage between languages results in a less predictable mobility, a gliding away from the promised solid surface. The image of gliding conjures associations of randomness and drift, against the well-defined route of the passageway. Stable passage is a promise never fulfilled. Its pursuit only activates an unstable mobility which leads to something less solid than anticipated, the 'brigandry of utterance'. The image of the brigand - a fugitive, one who pillages, living at odds with the world - is used to convey language as ill-disciplined. It does not allow stable passage from system of signification to another, as each language has its own set of laws with which words negotiate specific and unique meanings. Suleri's rich vocabulary is useful for my purposes for two reasons. First, she argues that perfect translation is impossible. Second, Suleri's phrase 'the brigandry of utterance' gestures towards translation as potentially transgressive. In *Shame*, the narrator mobilises translation in an attempt to oppose the language of those in power by seizing the instability of language that Suleri identifies as the brigandry of utterance.

A conception of translation as enabling oppositional critique requires further comment. Paul de Man considers translation as a strategy of critique. In *The Resistance to Theory*, de Man offers a reading of Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator'. Paraphrasing Benjamin, he proposes that translation is not a simple movement between words perceived to be equivalent in different languages. There is no secure passageway between languages. '[T]he moment a translation is really literal, *wortlich*, word by word, the meaning completely disappears' (de Man, 1986: 88). This is because literal translation ignores the structural *relationships* between words that are vital to the production of meaning. Semantics are always mediated through structure. A translation reformulates the original by seeking to give it expression within a different set of linguistic rules. This is a near impossible task, as the structure of one language never approximates fully that of another. For this reason, translations

are chiefly interlinguistic enterprises. A translation highlights how the original depends upon and manipulates the structure of its language to suggest meanings. In both the translation and the original we can notice how the 'errancy of language [...] never reaches the mark' (de Man, 1986: 92) of the referent. We might notice a contiguity between Suleri's notion of language as mobile, and de Man's use of the term 'errancy'. Both refer to the unpredictable motion of language that never makes its referent fully present within it. As I shall demonstrate in a moment, it is the errant motion or brigandry of language made visible by translation that the narrator of *Shame* seizes for the purposes of critique.

The productiveness of translation as a strategy of critique suited to postcolonial practices is raised by both Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Tejaswini Niranjana. In her essay 'The Politics of Translation', Spivak argues that language operates on three planes that intersect: the logical, the rhetorical, and the silent. Spivak notices that language always implies a logical structure, a set of rules which enable its communication. But, recalling de Man, logic is always in danger of disruption from 'rhetoric or figuration' (Spivak, 1993: 180). Rhetoric and figuration highlight the ability for one to play with the rules of language to create new possibilities of expression. If logic demarcates 'clearly indicated connections' (Spivak, 1993: 181) between words, then rhetoric works 'in the silence between and around words' (Spivak, 1993: 181). Meaning is never fully present in the word itself. In short, any translator must attend to both the words and the silences of a text, as meaning is negotiated by opening up these silences that enable the play of interpretation. Spivak refers to this as remaining sensitive to the 'disruptive rhetoricity' (Spivak, 1993: 180) of a text, the way a text can generate possible meanings by disrupting the logic of language's structure. As a consequence, translation is always involved with power. Spivak asserts that a translation which does not account for the rhetoricity of the original is 'a species of neo-colonial construction' (Spivak, 1993: 181), as the particular nuances of the original become lost. Literal translation refuses to attend to the semantic possibilities of the original generated by its rhetoricity.¹ Respecting rhetoricity is

¹ Spivak uses the example of Mahasweta Devi's 'Stanadayini', which has been translated into two versions: 'Breast-Giver' and 'The Wet-Nurse.' For Spivak many of the resonances of the story are lost in 'The Wet-Nurse' because the translator has not attended to the text's cultural specificities, such as the Bengali proverbs, nor its play with rhetoric which opens up for Spivak exciting possibilities of meaning. 'Read together,' she concludes, 'the loss of rhetorical silences of the original can be felt from one to the other' (Spivak, 1993: 183).

ultimately a means by which a translator attends to the cultural specificity of the 'original'. Tejaswini Niranjana similarly focuses upon the relationship between translation and power. She argues that translation has been a tool of imperial ideology, despite the claims made for translation as a method of cultural exchange:

Translation - in the narrowest sense of the word, that is, to turn something from one language into another, or interlinguistic translation - has traditionally been viewed by literary critics in the West (at least since the Renaissance) as the noble task of bridging the gap between peoples, as the quintessential humanist enterprise. (Niranjana, 1992: 47)

Using nineteenth-century translations of the Orient as her example, Niranjana argues that translations produced debased images of colonised subjects in order to justify the rationality of colonial power. Translations are overdetermined by ideological concerns, and work 'through the repression of the asymmetrical relations of power that inform the relations between languages' (Niranjana, 1992: 60). She exposes the assumption held by many such translators that they were purifying Indian languages by converting their texts into English, quoting Edward Fitzgerald's comments to a friend that '[i]t is an amusement to me to take what liberties I like with these Persians who [...] are not Poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to shape them' (quoted in Niranjana, 1992: 59). Translation was aligned to the value structure of the imperial project; it did not so much bridge the gap between cultures as collude in the manufacture of imperialist power. While exposing the historical uses of translation, Niranjana seeks to reclaim translation as a way of reading 'against the grain of hegemonic representation' (Niranjana, 1992: 82) that can enable the 'rewriting of history' (Niranjana, 1992: 82) from a postcolonial position. Borrowing a term from Spivak, Niranjana argues that new kinds of reading - 'transactional readings' (Niranjana, 1992: 42) - are required to deconstruct the apparent transparency of many forms of representation, such as imperialist histories or translations. A transactive reading is one which attends to the 'repression of difference' (Niranjana, 1992: 43) in those hegemonic representations which make a claim for truth, breaking a text open to search for those voices which the text conceals. She encourages a focusing upon the tropes of imperial writing in order to discover the derogatory associations that are given to the non-Western 'other'. 'Recognising the tropes of translation' (Niranjana,

1992: 82) can focus attention on representation as discursive, not mimetic, a reality that is forged not recorded. Such transactive readings, attending to the rhetorical plane of language and reading against it, are themselves a form of translation because they interrogate the structure which gave meaning to representations in the first place. For Niranjana, translation is a form of power, but also a potential mode of critique.

Shame appropriates translation as a mode of critique to destabilise the authority of those in positions of power. Many critics have been keen to read *Shame* as an allegory of the fortunes of Pakistan primarily in the 1970s in its depiction of the reign of Bhutto and Zia. I began this chapter by touching upon Shamsul Islam's reading of the novel that finds perfect correspondence between Rushdie's fictional characters and figures from recent Pakistani history. A similar approach is taken by Stephanie Moss. Her 'emblematic reading' (Moss, 1992: 28) of the female characters in *Shame* does recognise the fictional status of each, but claims that each character as a correspondent emblem of elements from Pakistan's history. Thus, the three mothers of Omar Khayyam Shakil - Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny - 'represent the three major schisms in the country's culture -- Indian, Pakistani, and English' (Moss, 1992: 82). Bilquis Hyder signifies Muslim Pakistan. Their daughter, Sufiya Zinobia, is post-Partition Pakistan who is 'split in two like the hair she will later divide to its roots (anticipating the emergence of Bangladesh)' (Moss, 1992: 29). Both Islam and Moss ignore the hesitancy of Rushdie's depiction of a country that is 'not quite' (Rushdie, 1983: 29) Pakistan in their eagerness to discover perfect correspondence between the text and its referent. Such an approach, although certainly fruitful, pays little attention to what is at stake in the narrative strategies used to fictionalise this particular referent. The novel's narrator is keen to register a disjunction between real and fictional worlds that opens a gap between them. The novel's narrator certainly provokes comparisons to be made between the narrative and Pakistani history. But he also urges a resistance against asserting equivalence between real and fictional realms. Consider, for example, the hesitancy of the narrator's voice exemplified in this passage:

The country in this story is not Pakistan, *or not quite*. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, *or almost the same space*. My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centring to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. (Rushdie, 1983: 29 - my emphasis)

In the emphasised phrases the narrator's voice checks itself. He makes statements that he immediately modifies or questions. It is an unstable, fissured and mobile voice, constantly re-appraising its representations, refusing to fix meanings.¹ It is this mobility that enables the novel's critique. At one point, the narrator imagines how his story might have proceeded if he were writing 'a realistic novel' (Rushdie, 1983: 69). There follows a list of indictments against the Pakistani government the narrator argues would be included in a realist text. Concluding, he suggests that

[b]y now, if I had been writing a book of this nature, it would have done me no good to protest that I was writing universally, not only about Pakistan. The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart. (Rushdie, 1983: 70)

I think that this comical, sarcastic discourse about writing in a realist fashion is also a warning against reading the text as a realist account of Pakistani history. Such a reading would neglect the 'effort' of the narrator to tell his tale in a particular fashion, and leave unexplored the subversive possibilities triggered by the mobility of his voice. It is significant that this authorial intervention is circumscribed by two anecdotes concerning the habits of Bilquis Hyder and her daughter Sufiya Zinobia. The first concerns Bilquis who, after having her clothes wrenched from her body by the explosion which destroyed her father's cinema, becomes obsessed with fixity. While living with Raza, she becomes unsettled by the Loo wind:

She developed a horror of movement, and placed an embargo on the relocation of even the most trivial of household items. Chairs, ashtrays, flowerpots took root, rendered immobile by the force of her fearful will. 'My Hyder likes everything in its place,' she would say later, but the disease of fixity was hers. (Rushdie, 1983: 68)

In contrast to her disease of fixity, her daughter is possessed with a 'fondness for moving the furniture around' (Rushdie, 1983: 70), to the annoyance of her husband, Omar Khayyam Shakil: 'Honestly, wife,' he wanted to exclaim, 'God knows what you'll achieve with all this shifting shifting' (Rushdie, 1983: 71). The placing of the narrator's intervention between each anecdote neatly highlights how the narrative voice of *Shame* is always traversing these two activities:

¹ David Edgar responds to the tonal variety of the text's narrative voice by asserting that *Shame* is best thought of as having *multiple* narrators, 'some of whom [. . .] are serious fellows, reflective and mature; others querulous, or coy, or sometimes mannered' (Edgar, 1984: 126).

fixing and shifting. Like Ishiguro's novels, *Shame* hovers between two kinds of historiography: the first is concerned with making judgements about the past, the other opens the past up to multiple possibilities of interpretation. Pakistan is indeed fixed as the referent of the novel in the narrator's intrusions into his narrative. But the process of shifting Pakistan between a variety of narrative strategies - a process I will claim as translation - opens a space that enables a critical historiography. Omar Khayyam Shakil's question about 'shifting shifting' can be read as a metafictional pointer, a question which the novel wants the reader to ask of the narrator's fictionalisation of Pakistan's history, a process which puts that history on the move. It is this shifting that approximates the narrator's 'effort', and which more literal interpretations neglect.

Let me move now to consider the narrator's attempts at 'shifting shifting' in the context of those theories of translation I explored earlier. The shifting effected by translation is introduced as a theme initially through the name of Omar Khayyam Shakil. Omar's name recalls that of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam who became popular in the nineteenth century through the translations of Edward Fitzgerald. Timothy Brennan reminds us of the 'incomparable translations of [Khayyam's] work and the tendency of Rubaiyat collections to include the poems of other Persian poets' (Brennan, 1989: 120). Niranjana argued that translation is a form of mediation where power relations are negotiated. *Shame* approaches translation from a similar perspective, attentive to the power relations it configures. Translation as a tool of power has been perpetuated by the creators of Pakistan:

[Pakistan] was a word born in exile which then went East, was borne-across or trans-lated, and imposed itself on history; a returning migrant, settling down on partitioned land, forming a palimpsest on the past. A palimpsest obscures what lies beneath. To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done. (Rushdie, 1983: 87)

Here the narrator approaches translation in terms similar to Niranjana, but goes one stage further. Translation has served to cover up and conceal like a palimpsest, literally 'writing material or manuscript on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for a second writing'.¹ If Niranjana argues that translation is the tool of colonialism, it is represented

¹ This is the meaning given in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Seventh Edition).

in *Shame* also as hallmark of this post-colonial nation. By using translation as a mode of critique, as I shall demonstrate in a moment, the narrator is opposing specifically the ruling élite of post-colonial Pakistan. This focus is continued in the spatial metaphors of the passage. The narrator describes Pakistan as an imposition from above; it is something which specifically settles down upon the land.¹ For the narrator, it becomes possible 'to see the subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been' (Rushdie, 1983: 87). As the image of the palimpsest implies, this is also a battle of languages. It becomes opportune for the narrator to contest the hegemony of Pakistan's rulers by uncovering that which is suppressed by their power. Translation is the tool the narrator uses both to release voices from 'below' and to disarticulate the rhetoric of those 'above'.

Let us consider first the releasing of those voices 'below'. One strategy is a refusal at the level of narrative form to perpetuate the logic of the palimpsest. The narrator reveals the stories that have been effaced by the 'final' version of the text which we are reading. Raza Hyder's backwards daughter, Sufyia Zinobia, 'grew out of the corpse' (Rushdie, 1983: 116) of a young Pakistani girl living in London who was murdered by her father for the shameful act of sleeping with a white boy. That girl mutated into a fictional creation, Anna Muhammad, from East London, who in turn was superseded by Sufiyya. Although the narrator posits that 'every story one tells is a kind of censorship, it prevents the telling of other tales' (Rushdie, 1983: 71), the thrust of his narrative works in the contrary direction by pointing out the multiple possibilities the narrative engaged, rejected or used. Silenced voices do not necessarily disappear, but leave traces, just as Anna Muhammad 'haunts' (Rushdie, 1983: 116) *Shame*. The construction of the narrative recalls the narrator's version of Pakistan as a palimpsest that conceals beneath itself other possibilities. By calling attention to early versions of his narrative, the narrator resists the effacement of what lies beneath. A sense of other possibilities residing

¹ The vocabulary Rushdie uses to represent the creation of Pakistan reflects the views of Tariq Ali. In his book *Can Pakistan Survive?*, Ali argues that Pakistan was created by a members of a concerned elite social class, with no roots in popular uprising or any real consensus from the working classes 'below'. 'Consulting the masses was not seen as necessary,' writes Ali when portraying the creation of Pakistan by Jinnah and the Muslim League during the late 1940s: 'they were merely informed of the decision that had been taken' (Ali, 1983: 40) to create a Muslim confessional state. In an interview with John Haffenden, Rushdie admitted he had not read Ali's book when writing his novel, but had since received a copy and concurred with Ali's views (Haffenden, 1985: 258).

beneath the surface is continued in the narrator's depiction of the silencing of other voices as a form of burial. The voices below require excavation, like an archaeological dig:

Mutant versions of the past of the past struggle for dominance [...] Only the mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the anonymous, the defeated leave few marks: field-patterns, axe-heads, folk-tales, broken pitchers, burial mounds, the fading memory of their youthful beauty. (Rushdie, 1983: 124)

Both the past and the present must be searched and excavated for these alternative voices. These are made available by the bearing across of the text's subject matter into a variety of forms, like folklore, fairy-tale or jokes.¹ There are several species of translation in *Shame*, and this shifting between genres is one of them. It occurs to bear witness to the silenced voices 'below'. Each recoding of the narrative engenders new possibilities, so that the narrative constantly turns and mutates. By shifting the narrative between different modes, the narrator discovers possibilities of dissent against those in positions of power. Consider the narrator's penchant for jokes. The narrator likens the effect of comedy to 'a permanent mutation' (Rushdie, 1983: 130), and travesties the authority of those in power. As Babar Shakil sits drunkenly in a bar in Q., he overhears the chatter of the others customers ridiculing Raza Hyder's rule:

fortunately our government loves us still, so much that it has made our sex drive the top national priority. - How's that? - But it is obvious to see: this government is happy to go on screwing us from now until doomsday.
- O, too good, yaar, too good. (Rushdie, 1983: 130)

These voices are anonymous, belonging to 'travelling jokers with drums and horns' (Rushdie, 1983: 130). Similarly anonymous is the joker who places the lower part of a suit of armour in Arjumand Harappa's bedroom (Rushdie, 1983: 182). The anonymous narrator joins in the joke-telling with one of his own concerning several visits made by God to Pakistan's successive leaders. These brigandly utterances, anonymously voiced, release through comedy other critical possibilities of reading the political life of the nation. They bear witness to the voices of the weak, anonymous and defeated that the narrator refers to in his comments about the survival of certain mutant versions of the past. This translation between narrative forms has similar effects

¹ Timothy Brennan has already pursued the folkloric aspects of the novel, pointing to its exaggerated use of tripartite structures (Brennan, 1989: 124) common in folkloric narratives

to the 'transactive readings' urged by Niranjana I noted above. The narrator of *Shame* breaks open the palimpsest that produces a repression of differences in order to unearth previously silenced voices.

Turning next to the disarticulation of the voices 'above', I suggest this involves pitting the errancy of language foregrounded by translation against the dominant language of the state. Here the narrator mobilises another species of translation, one that is concerned specifically with the act of moving between one language and another, rather than between narrative modes. My exploration of this process will appropriate de Man's comments that translation foregrounds the errancy of language. As a 'confessional' state, the rulers of Peccavistan seek to implement a code of laws derived from Muslim scripture. In his vociferous condemnation of the confessional state, the narrator calls attention to the important role of sacred language in consolidating power:

So-called Islamic 'fundamentalism' does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religions shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited, disenfranchised, mocked. (Rushdie, 1983: 251)

This representation recalls the concept of the palimpsest in its depiction of the imposition of words from 'above'. Examples are provided of how sacred language functions in the service of power. Raza Hyder's activities while defending the gas pipeline from tribal agitators at Q. are sanctioned by the local divine, Maulana Dawood.¹ Through systematic violence and executions, Raza takes 'a firm line, and Maulana Dawood gives him all the advice he needs' (Rushdie, 1983: 112). After taking office, Raza Hyder is questioned by an 'Angrez television interviewer' (Rushdie 1983: 245) as to the humanity of some of his country's laws. He defends them on the grounds of their sanctity:

these are not laws, my dear fellow, which we have plucked out of the wind. These are the holy words of God, as revealed in sacred texts. Now if they are

¹ By using the name Maulana Dawood, the narrator is making a comic allusion to M.J. Dawood, translator of the Penguin edition of the *Koran*. Sarder and Davies vociferously condemn M.J. Dawood's translation as 'deliberately mistranslated and distorted [...] Muslims regard Dawood's translation, which seeks to recast the entire order of the original, as thoroughly obnoxious, misleading and distorted: in fact, the distorted imagination in translation' (Sarder and Davies, 1990: 91, 92).

holy words of God, they cannot also be barbaric. It is not possible. They must be some other thing. (Rushdie, 1983: 245)

The connecting branch between the words of God and the national polity is represented by Maulana Dawood. When Peccavistan's women begin marching against Raza's rule, Dawood demands that 'he should strip the whores naked and hang them from all available trees' (Rushdie, 1983: 249). Although Raza's response differs in degree, it does not differ in kind - he asks the police to 'avoid hitting the ladies on the breasts when they broke up the demonstrations' (Rushdie, 1983: 249). In short, Raza wishes Peccavistani society to be structured like a holy language. To appropriate a term from Lyotard, the language of the Koran becomes the legitimating metanarrative of the nation. An attempt to constitute one language as authoritative threatens Rushdie's ideal model of the nation as a place of plurality and heterogeneity, where difference reigns. Raza's motto when in office - 'Stability, in the name of God' (Rushdie, 1983: 249) - is significant for at least two reasons. First, it reveals instability as a threat. Second, the attention to the 'name of God' foregrounds the connection between social stability and language. God is both a metaphysical presence and a proper name that, in terms of linguistic structure, will function as a transcendental signified that gives stability to the unitary language of the state. For this reason, I suggest that the mobility of the narrator's voice can be explained as a mode of opposition. As I demonstrated earlier, the narrator's voice is rarely stable. His narrative deliberately shifts as it proceeds. He reveals early versions of the text, switches between the first and third person, introduces characters later relegated to peripheral roles, and shifts between representing the fictional Peccavistan and providing information about its referent, Pakistan. The narrator refuses to succumb to the logic of Raza Hyder, who privileges a unitary language that is stable, devoid of errancy. He threatens the hegemony of that language by foregrounding the errancy of language. This is achieved by the narrator's attempt to translate between shame and *sharam*. The narrator's pursuit of the associations of *sharam* sets in motion a critical process commensurate with what Suleri called the brigandry of utterance. The narrator's attempts to translate *sharam* are strategic and expose the 'repression of difference' (Niranjana, 1992: 43) that operates in Peccavistan. By pursuing the derogatory associations of

this word, the narrator appropriates the errant rhetoricity of the sign that is pitted against the stability Raza desires in the name of God.

The narrator's attempt to translate *sharam* adequately inevitably figures its rhetoricity. Like the leitmotifs in *Midnight's Children*, *sharam* acquires several mobile meanings that do not result in a stable, final definition. By pursuing its several uses, the narrator achieves two objectives. The first is the maintenance of the multiple signifying possibilities of *sharam* that opposes an attempt to fix a stable, authoritative language. The second is the unmasking of a different structure of meaning behind the official religious rhetoric of the state. The narrator configures the social and the linguistic in the phrase: 'To unlock a society, look at its untranslatable words' (Rushdie, 1983: 104). He informs us that he is dissatisfied with the word 'shame' in his narrative, as it signifies the 'wrong concepts' (Rushdie, 1983: 38) making it a poor translation of *sharam*. Like Spivak's ideal translator, the narrator is aware of the nuances of the word he seeks to translate. *Sharam* cuts an errant passage through the narrative of *Shame*, acquiring a range of meanings. *Sharam* carries with it a particular set of possibilities: 'embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotion which English has no counterparts' (Rushdie, 1983: 39). The reader is made aware that each usage of the word 'shame' gestures to an untranslatable word, the meanings of which can only be approximated. As M.D. Fletcher argues, the definition of *sharam* highlights 'the cultural bases of meanings' (Fletcher, 1986: 129). Suleri's comments are useful to recall at this point. The narrator cannot discover a safe passage between shame and *sharam* in his attempt to translate the latter into English. The errant passage that is triggered by his attempts to convey the precise meanings of *sharam* reveal a side to Peccavistan society hidden beneath the official rhetoric espoused in particular by Dawood and Raza Hyder. At one level, he conveys Peccavistan as an oppressive state by conveying the position of women. Omar's mothers - Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny - imagine how horrified their dead father would have been at the thought of the party they held at Flashman's hotel where Omar was conceived. Munnee's words are particularly revealing: 'To him it would have seemed like a completely shameless going-on, an abhorrence, the proof of his failure to impose his will on us.' (Rushdie, 1983: 15). Following the logic of this statement, to feel shame is to acknowledge the

power of another over one's self. This is intimated in the confrontation between Iskander and Raza at a party at Mohenjo, when Omar publicly lets slip that Raza Hyder is attracted to Pinkie Aurangzeb, Iskander's new mistress. Bilquis silences the room with a shriek and, pointing to Omar, says 'You hear that man, husband? Hear what shame *he is making for me*' (Rushdie, 1983: 109 - emphasis added). Note that the shame is not Raza's; his adulterous interests bring no shame upon himself but his wife. Bilquis Hyder's misery concerning her stillborn child is compounded by her cousin Duniyazad Begum, who argues that Rani is bringing shame upon Raza's family: 'The disgrace of your barrenness, Madam is not your alone. Don't you know that shame is collective? The shame of any one of us sits on us all and bends our backs' (Rushdie, 1983: 84). Rani finds herself courting more shamelessness when she gives birth to Sufiya Zinobia, a female. Outraged at the gender of his child, Raza demands to see the hospital supervisor to demand an explanation. To bring a daughter into the world before a son is, according to this logic, utterly shameful.

Sharam accumulates more and more associations through the character of Sufiya Zinobia, who comes to function as a symbol of the repressed shame of Peccavistan. Sufiya Zinobia is technically the second child of Bilquis and Raza Hyder; their first was still born. She is expected to be male, a reincarnation of the son Raza believes he had lost, but instead she becomes the 'wrong miracle' (Rushdie, 1983: 89), a female child who disappoints her parents due to her perceived gender. An idiot child, Bilquis regards Sufiya Zinobia as her 'shame' (Rushdie, 1983: 101), a punishment for her incapacity to yield a son to Raza. Sufiya Zinobia becomes a symbolic repository for the unfelt shame produced by other activities that do not primarily concern gender inequalities: 'examination failures, smuggling, throwing one's wicket away at a crucial point of a Test Match: [things] done *shamelessly*' (Rushdie, 1983: 122). Her slaughter of Pinkie Aurangzeb's turkeys is explained as the product of repressed emotions on the part of Raza and Bilquis, as she has become a 'family's shame made flesh' (Rushdie, 1983: 139), allowing Raza and Bilquis's ambivalent emotions towards Pinkie to be released in an act of violence. Another nuance of *sharam* is revealed in the narrator's comments that her actions exemplify the 'hidden path that links *sharam* to violence' (Rushdie, 1983: 139). Sufiya's transformation from an idiot child into the fabled 'white panther' (Rushdie, 1983: 253)

epitomises the brigandry of *sharam*, the multiple possibilities it acquires during its passage through the novel.

As these examples demonstrate, the meaning of *sharam* is constantly mobile. Its final meaning cannot be fixed. By attempting to convey the associations of the *sharam*, the narrator has revealed an apparatus operative in Peccavistan that suppresses difference. The rhetoricity of *sharam* bears witness to a process of silencing the narrator wishes to fracture. This enables judgements to be made concerning the imposition from above of a legitimating metanarrative that operates as a palimpsest, effacing other possibilities of signification. The superabundant associations of *sharam* threaten the construction of stability that is essential to Raza's quest for stability in the name of God. The errancy of language foregrounded by translation, coupled with the mobile voice of the narrator, enables a mode of resistance. *Shame* refuses to participate in the perpetuation of a unitary language. The act of translation releases a range of narrative mutations that are pitted against the logic of imposing a unitary legitimating metanarrative as a the only language of the state. To borrow once more from Suleri's vocabulary, the unstable passage opened by the act of translation is, in *Shame*, an important mode of oppositional critique.

The Satanic Verses: The present moment of the past

My reading of *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* has attempted to reveal Rushdie's assertion of the principles of superabundance, heterogeneity, plurality and difference. I wish to conclude this chapter by noticing briefly the defence of heterogeneity that is the fulcrum of *The Satanic Verses*. This novel brings together the superabundance of *Midnight's Children* and the errancy of language in *Shame* to create a model of history that opposes dominant epistemologies. *The Satanic Verses* has achieved notoriety partly as a consequence of its condemnation by Muslim readers.¹ My reading of the novel looks briefly at its articulation of

¹ On February 14th 1989, Salman Rushdie was sentenced to death by the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, for the crime of blasphemy against Islam. At the time of writing, Rushdie is still in hiding as a consequence of the Ayatollah's *fatwa*. The so-called 'Rushdie Affair' has been well documented. Lisa Appignanesi and Sarah Maitland's *The Rushdie File* records the development through the articles and opinions expressed at the time (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989). Malise Ruthven's helpful book *A Satanic Affair* explores the reception of *The Satanic Verses* in the British Muslim community, and contextualises the affair in terms of international politics (Ruthven, 1991). Muslim hostility to the novel is eloquently expressed in Shabir Akhtar's *Be Careful With Mohammad!* (Akhtar, 1989). Of those that have defended the novel, perhaps the most extreme is Fay Weldon's outraged - and outrageous - attack on

three versions of history. The first concerns the Imam's opposition to history as the realm of uncertainty. The second is a product of colonial discourse. The third is Rushdie's positing of a model of history that threatens the denial of difference imposed by these models. It can be summarised by a phrase that is used in the final pages of the novel - 'the *present moment of the past*' (Rushdie, 1988: 535). This model repudiates a conventional, teleological history and asserts instead one that denies *telos* and accommodates multiplicity through the errant motion of mutation. *The Satanic Verses* offers a model of history that can be set in opposition to Baudrillard's depiction of fragmentation and depthlessness. Baudrillard argues that the only history left is one where '[e]very political, historical and cultural fact possesses a kinetic energy which wrenches it from its own space and propels it into a hyperspace where, since it will never return, it loses all meaning' (Baudrillard, 1994: 2). Rushdie's novel reveals the myopia of Baudrillard's argument. In *The Satanic Verses*, 'the present moment of the past' is a recognition of both the possibilities for change and the hegemony of existing discourses within which a new model of history is negotiated.

The narrator of *Shame* describes his position as a migrant in terms of translation. 'I, too, am a translated man. I have been borne across. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion [...] that something can also be gained' (Rushdie, 1983: 29). The point of departure for *The Satanic Verses* is the bearing across of migrancy. It begins by depicting Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, two passengers destined for London aboard an Air India aircraft. Their passage from India to Britain has been errant. First, their aircraft is hijacked for 111 days. Next, it is destroyed in mid-air by a terrorist's bomb, flinging Gibreel and Saladin into the dawn sky. In his description of the debris of the plane that falls with them, the narrator calls attention to the destruction of certainties that have not survived the passage: 'equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home*' (Rushdie, 1988: 4). The emphasis on loss in this passage recalls similar

Islam in her pamphlet *Sacred Cows* (Weldon, 1989). A special edition of *Third Text, Beyond the Rushdie Affair*, appeared in 1990. The collected essays, including work by Wilson Harris, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Tariq Modood and Sohail Inayatullah, represent the range of opinions voiced on all sides of the debate.

comments concerning migrancy as a process of translation made by the narrator of *Shame*. But just as that narrator offsets the losses of migrancy with the potential for gain, so in the opening of *The Satanic Verses* the productivity of migrancy is maintained. This functions through the punning of 'borne' and 'born'. The bearing across of Gibreel and Saladin enables them to be born again. Their descent from the wrecked aircraft is described in terms of childbirth. They plummet 'like bundles dropped by some carelessly open-beaked stork [...] Chamcha was going down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal' (Rushdie, 1988: 4). The fragmentation of old certainties also allows new possibilities to be born. As the narrator suggests, 'when you throw up everything up in the air anything becomes possible' (Rushdie, 1988: 5). *The Satanic Verses* is an attempt to encapsulate the plurality of the migrant's experience, one that involves the pain of loss and the productivity of new possibilities.

One possibility is the chance to repudiate existing epistemologies. The novel dramatises two epistemologies, each with its own model of history. They are contested because they legislate against the possibilities released through migrancy by trapping the subject within fixed parameters. The first asserts the end of history itself, and is represented by the exiled Imam who appears at the beginning of the 'Ayesha' section of the novel. The Imam opposes the contingent and mobile processes of history to the secure certainties of religious truth. The other is the received history of Empire, and the discourses of cultural difference that operated on its behalf to fix racial inequalities. The migrancy that Gibreel, Saladin, and others experience is mobilised in *The Satanic Verses* to facilitate a third model of history, one that rejects the fixed certainties of these others. Let us consider first the Imam's representation of history. The Imam is an exile and lives in a flat in Kensington. The narrator's description of the Imam calls attention to his loathing of his host culture. The curtains are kept drawn 'because otherwise the evil thing might creep into the apartment: foreignness, Abroad, the alien nation' (Rushdie, 1988: 206). In shutting out the outside world, the Imam considers himself to be protecting the purity of his religious faith. Elements of otherness are seen as the work of the devil, who deliberately aspires to replace divine knowledge with secular learning. The Imam constructs a manichean model of history whose eradication is an important goal:

History is the blood-wine that must no longer be drunk. History the intoxicant, the creation and possession of the Devil, of the great Shaitan, the greatest of lies - progress, science, rights - against which the Imam has set his face. History is a deviation from the Path, knowledge is a delusion, because the sum of knowledge was complete on the day Al-Lah finished his revelation to Mahound. 'We will unmake the veil of history, ' Bilal declaims into the listening night, 'and when it is unravelled, we will see Paradise standing there, in all its glory and light.' (Rushdie, 1988: 210-211)

Religious certainty arrests the motion of history by invalidating the need for progress, the development of science, or the negotiation of new rights. The course of history is a property of an imperfect world that has rejected religious wisdom. Those who reject God sacrifice, in the Imam's words, 'certainty, and also the sense of His boundless time, that encompasses past, present and future; the timeless time, that has no need to move' (Rushdie, 1988: 214). This paradoxical 'timeless time' demolishes divisions through the production of homogeneity. The Imam promises that after the revolution in his homeland '[w]e shall all be born again, all of us the same unchanging age in the eye of Almighty God' (Rushdie, 1988: 214). History becomes the realm where the convictions of faith are replaced by uncertainty and instability. The Imam's desire to unmake the veil of history is a destruction of multiple possibility. Difference will be annihilated in a scenario where all subjects are essentially the same before God, unchanging for all time. The motion of history will be conquered.

The second model of history that is contested is the received history of the Empire. Both Gibreel and Saladin are exposed to this history in the 'Elooween Deeowen' section of the novel, when they are discovered on the snow-covered beach outside the home of Rosa Diamond after falling from the bombed aircraft. The description of Rosa Diamond and her home introduces the theme of conquest. Rosa is conscious that her home is located at a point of the English coast which witnessed the Norman invasion. Gibreel awakes on the beach with his mouth full of snow. As Srinivas Aravamudan suggests, this moment is an analogue of 'William the Conqueror's legendary first taste of a mouthful of English sand' (Aravamudan, 1989: 14). The immediate fortunes of Gibreel and Saladin invite a reading in terms of colonial discourse. They occupy the contrary positions of the colonised subject in colonial discourse. In making this argument, I have in mind Homi Bhabha's approach to the colonised stereotype as a mode of subjectification. In his essay 'The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse

of colonialism', Bhabha argues that colonial discourse posits stereotypes of the colonised subject that attempt to secure the difference between colonised and colonising cultures. The stereotype betrays fixity as an aim of colonial discourse. That is, it seeks to stabilise the unequal relations between coloniser and colonised by establishing a mode of representation that traps the colonised in a certain subject-position. Bhabha's argument proceeds from the premise that

[a]n important feature of colonial discourse is the dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as a the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. (Bhabha, 1994: 66)

In other words the fixity required by colonial discourse can never be established securely. Bhabha traces the inseparability of two forms of possession involved in stereotypical representations of colonial subjects that produce ambivalence. The first reflects the institutionalised mechanisms of power mobilised by colonialism. The second concerns a desire for the perceived other. For Bhabha, the representation of the colonised subject articulates ambivalently both forms of possession. The colonised subject is both the focus of 'incitement and interdiction' (Bhabha, 1994: 72). 'Interdiction' refers to the prohibitions that result from the institutional power relations of colonial discourse. 'Incitement' refers to the colonised subject as an object of fantasy that Bhabha likens to the Freudian concept of the fetish. The fetish is an object of both fear and desire.¹ For Bhabha, stereotypes of the colonised subject function in a same way to Freud's fetishised objects. Its perception corrupts the universality of the colonising race by emphasising difference. For Freud, the fetish object substitutes for the absent female penis. Using this notion of substitution, Bhabha argues that the construction of the colonial stereotype functions to disavow cultural difference. It promises an access to 'the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy - the subject's desire for pure origin that is always threatened by

¹ Freud argues that fetish objects are created to assist a little boy in coping with the realisation that his mother does not possess a penis. The fetish becomes 'a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that [he] once believed in [...] and does not want to give up' (Freud, 1977: 352). The boy disavows this frightening intimation of his own potential castration by fixing upon an object that substitutes for the mother's absent penis. The substitute enables him to deal with the trauma of castration by maintaining his hitherto conviction that women possess penises. The fetish, then, is 'a token of triumph over the threat of castration and the threat against it' (Freud, 1977: 353). The fetish disavows difference.

its division' (Bhabha, 1994: 75). In these terms, the colonial stereotype is an ambivalent representation that is both derided and desired, an object of both loathing and desire.

The contrary positions of the colonial stereotype are articulated in Gibreel's and Saladin's different fortunes immediately after their discovery by Rosa Diamond. Gibreel is appropriated by Rosa as an object of desire that promises a return to her fantasised past. He becomes ensnared in her 'narrative sorcery' (Rushdie, 1988: 148). Rosa's house is cluttered with the ornaments of her past in Argentina, where she moved in 1935 as the wife of Henry Diamond. Diamond was the British owner of the estate of Los Alamos. During Gibreel's sojourn, Rosa soon slips into remembering her past in Argentina and her affair with Martín de la Cruz. Gibreel comes to resemble her lost lover. He feels that he no longer has agency over his actions, and realises that 'his will was no longer his own to command, that somebody else's needs were in charge' (Rushdie, 1988: 143). Rosa acts once again the memories of her youth through the figure of Gibreel, who feels 'her stories winding round him like a web, holding him in that lost world' (Rushdie, 1988: 146). In a series of fantastic scenes, Gibreel imagines himself as Martín de la Cruz making love to Rosa. At one moment he seems to see '[I]inking the two of them, navel to navel, [...] a shining cord' (Rushdie, 1988: 154). Their relationship is packed with significance. Gibreel, the migrant, becomes an object of desire because he allows Rosa a return to her past abroad as the wife of a privateer. Allegorically, figured in their relationship is the suggestion that the arrival of migrants is desired because it enables those at the old colonial centre to resurrect their romanticised lives overseas. The reference to the umbilical cord suggests that the relations between coloniser and colonised might be born again in the influx of migrants to Britain. Gibreel functions as an object of desire because he offers a return to the lost world of conquest. Rosa believes that in England 'there was no room for new stories' (Rushdie, 1988: 144). The new possibilities facilitated by Gibreel's position as a migrant are denied by Rosa. She uses him as a substitute that disavows the loss of a romantic past by inserting him into an older narrative of conquest and desire. The episode depicts how the colonial past intrudes upon a present moment. The colonial subject is positioned in a mode of representation that historically is congenial to colonial discourse.

Saladin suffers the alternative fate by becoming an object of derision. He reflects the perception of the colonised subject as 'a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction' (Bhabha, 1994: 70). Saladin's experiences bring him face to face with British institutions - the immigration officers, the police, a hospital. He is arrested as an illegal immigrant at Rosa's cottage and subjected to abuse in the back of a police van by three immigration officers - Stein, Novak and Bruno. Bemused by his transformation into a figure that resembles a goat, replete with horns and cloven hooves, Saladin is exposed to racial prejudices. Insulted as a 'Packy' (Rushdie, 1988: 157), he is forced by the officers to eat his own excrement. Their abuse contains within it a denial of difference:

Novak and the rest had snapped out of their happy mood. 'Animal.' Stein cursed him as he administered a series of kicks [to Saladin], and Bruno joined in: 'You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilised standards. Eh?' And Novak took up the thread: 'We're talking about fucking personal hygiene here, you little fuck.' (Rushdie, 1988: 159)

Saladin becomes represented with recourse to stereotypical portrayals of the colonised subject. This is reflected in his fantastic transformation into an animal. As he recuperates in hospital after his ordeal, he is approached by a similarly fantastic creature that resembles 'a ferocious tiger, with three rows of teeth' (Rushdie, 1988: 167). The creature, a manticore, explains Saladin's transformation as the result of representation. The hospital is full of travellers to Britain whose transformations are the result of their representation by the host nation:

'There's a woman over that way,' [the manticore] said, 'who is now mostly water-buffalo. There are businessmen from Nigeria who have grown sturdy tails. There is a group of holidaymakers from Senegal who were doing no more than changing places when they were turned into slippery snakes. [...]

'But how do they do it?' Chamcha wanted to know.

'They describe us,' the other whispered solemnly. 'That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct'. (Rushdie, 1988: 168)

These fantastic literalisations of derogatory descriptions call attention to the demonisation of others in colonial discourse.¹ Saladin's fortunes literalise the relations between representation

¹ In his essay 'The New Empire Within Britain', Rushdie argues forcefully those who migrate to Britain meet once again the discourses of difference that operated within the colonies. The British 'have chosen [...] to import a new Empire, a new community of subject peoples of whom they think, and with whom

and power in colonial discourse, and gesture towards the pain of migrancy that must be balanced again its production of possibility.

In these terms, the transformation of Gibreel and Saladin into resembling respectively an angel and a devil bears witness to two epistemologies. The first is the manichean vision of the Imam, who figures the profanity of the world through oppositions such as light and darkness, purity and corruption, good against evil. In this epistemology history is a satanic aberration. The second reflects the contrary positions of the colonised subject in colonial discourse as objects of both desire and derision. This epistemology represents both a return to a lost past in the present, evidenced in Gibreel's relations with Rosa, and the perpetuation of past prejudices in the present, as demonstrated by Saladin's unpleasant experiences. Rushdie opposes the hegemony of each epistemology by seizing upon the mobility that complicates the quest for fixity in each. The mutation triggered by migrancy denies fixity. Mutation is a prominent theme in those scenes set in the Shaandaar Café in Brickhall, where Saladin recuperates after escaping from the hospital. The café is home to Muhammad Sufyan, his wife Hind, and their daughters Mishal and Anahita. Hind's experiences of migrating from Bangladesh to London focuses the problems of migrancy. The narrator informs us that '[e]verything she valued had been upset by the change; had in this process of translation, been lost' (Rushdie, 1988: 249). The fragmented certainties that were mentioned with the fall of Gibreel and Saladin at the beginning of the novel are a source of pain for Hind:

Where now was the city she knew? Where the village of her youth and the green waterways of home? The customs around which she had built her life were lost, too, or at least were hard to find. Nobody in this Vilayet had time for the slow courtesies of life back home, or for the many observances of faith. (Rushdie, 1988: 249)

Hind's husband, Muhammad, provides a strategy of coping with the loss of certainties such as home and faith. Muhammad is both a secularist and syncretist. His learning reflects a commingling of different sources of knowledge that facilitates strategies for survival. Muhammad refuses to see the world in manichean terms, such as East or West. He proposes to

they can deal, in very much the same way as their predecessors thought and dealt with [...] the "new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child," who made up, for Rudyard Kipling, the White Man's Burden' (Rushdie, 1991: 130).

Hind: 'let us not pretend that Western culture is not present; after these centuries, how could it not be part of our heritage?' (Rushdie, 1988: 246). Muhammad is particularly interested in mutation and metamorphosis. He explains Saladin's transformation into a satyr in two related ways. The first is with recourse to Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, in particular 'the notion of mutation in extremis, to ensure survival of the species' (Rushdie, 1988: 251). The second recalls the views of Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, that an excited Sufyan relates to Saladin:

' [...] "As yielding wax" - heated, you see, possibly for the sealing of documents or such, - "is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, Yet is indeed the same, even so our souls." - you hear, good sir? Our spirits! Our immortal essences! - "Are still the same forever, but adopt In their migrations ever-varying forms." [...] Your soul, my good poor dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form.' (Rushdie, 1988: 277)

Saladin's mutation reflects his derogation as a perceived other. But of value is the *motion* involved in his mutation. Mutation engenders possibility. In *The Satanic Verses*, the mobility of mutation is turned against attempts at fixity. The wayward passage of the mutations that occur in the novel are commensurate with the deviation of history that outrages the Imam. In short, mutation becomes a mode of resistance. Muhammad Sufyan's recital of Darwin and Ovid bind together the themes of mutation and metamorphosis. Mutation effects a change of being that is endless and productive, not degenerative. The errant motion of mutations exists outside the models of history common to the two epistemologies explored above. The passage of mutation is without *telos*; there is no final position where mutation will come to rest. Let me identify briefly three forms of mutation in the novel: the mutation of derogatory images of colonial discourse into symbols of liberation, the mutation of the self, and the mutation of received narratives. The errancy of mutation produces superabundance and heterogeneity that are pitted against attempts at fixity. Mutation is also a way of figuring the past in the present, but in a way that does not make the latter determine the former. Rather, the past can be appropriated for present purposes of resistance.

The mutation of derogatory images of colonial discourse into symbols of liberation is a common theme of the novel. It motivates Rushdie's controversial decision to fictionalise the Prophet Muhammad by adopting 'the demon-tag the farangis hung around his neck. To turn

insults into strengths, whigs, tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise, our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be the medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym: Mahound' (Rushdie, 1988: 93). The purpose of this act of reclamation is to release new possibilities of signification for a derogatory sign. A metamorphosis is effected in reclaiming the sign. This process is epitomised by the manticore that Saladin meets in the hospital. The manticore escapes his confinement in hospital by eating through its perimeter fence with his 'three rows of teeth' (Rushdie, 1988: 167). He appropriates the sign of his perceived degeneracy and puts it to new uses, thus supplementing its previous meaning. During Saladin's sojourn at the Shaandaar Cafe, the residents of Brickhall are visited by images of him in their dreams. They begin to wear images of Saladin's satanic mutation as signs of their collective identity. As Mishal Sufyan points out to Saladin, this reclamation is an important political act:

all of a sudden [Saladin's image] was everywhere, on the chests of young girls and in the windows protected against bricks by metal grilles, he was a defiance and a warning. Sympathy for the Devil: a new lease of life for an old tune. [...] 'Chamcha,' Mishal said excitedly, 'you're a hero. I mean, people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, make it our own.' (Rushdie, 1988: 286-287)

The reference in this quotation to the Rolling Stones song, 'Sympathy for the Devil', exemplifies this aspect of the text's repudiation of fixed images. Played on the radio, the song receives a new lease of life due to its appropriation that makes available new possibilities of signification. The images I have noted - Mahound, the manticore, Saladin's horns - are all attempts on the part of colonial discourse to establish signs that fix the perceived other. Through their appropriation, that fixity is denied by opening up new possibilities for meaning. The new meanings that old signs acquire are certainly important to the novel. But just as important is, at the level of signification, the *process* of metamorphosis that is in itself an important mode of resistance.

The theme of mutation is also linked to the errancy of the self. It is significant that both Gibreel and Saladin work as actors, and are used to adopting different persona and using different voices. Gibreel is the star of several Bombay 'talkies' (Rushdie, 1988: 11). Saladin

contributes voice-overs to television commercials and the popular *Aliens Show*. Their professions suggest the self similarly to be as plural as the roles they adopt. This point is made forcefully by the narrator:

O, the conflicting selves jostling and joggling within these bags of skin. No wonder we are unable to remain focused on anything for very long; no wonder we invent remote-control channel-hopping devices. If we turned these instruments upon ourselves we'd discover more channels than a cable or satellite mogul ever dreamed of . . . (Rushdie, 1988: 519)

The novel points to a plurality of the self that exists both synchronically and diachronically. Migrancy makes this process of the changing self particularly visible. Abu Simba, the Brickall activist, summarises this process when he declares 'we are here to change things. I concede at once that we ourselves shall be changed; African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than we would have been if we had not crossed the oceans' (Rushdie, 1988: 414). Finally, received narratives suffer their own errant mutations. For example, in 'A City Visible but Unseen', the myth of Orpheus in the Underworld (included in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) mutates into the story of Orphia in the London Underground. Rushdie rewrites Ovid's tale of Orpheus's failed attempt to rescue his wife Eurydice by reversing gender roles. During his fantastic tour of London convinced he is an angel, Gibreel appropriately visits the Angel underground station where he meets Orphia and her boyfriend Uriah Moseley. Prompted by complaints, the station manager has banned all communication between the couple. Gibreel urges Orphia to ignore the prohibition and descend into the 'lower depths' (Rushdie, 1988: 328) of the station. But Orphia finds Uri with another woman. Orpheus's broken promise to the gods that he will not look back at his faithful wife is replaced by Uri's faithless deception of Orphia. This vignette can be read as a metafictional gauge of Rushdie's technique in the novel. Rushdie's revised version of the Orpheus myth is unfaithful to its analogue. Similar is the death of Mirza Saeed, a secular sceptic who refuses to believe that the Arabian sea will part for Ayesha, who is leading the villagers from Titlipur to Mecca. Saeed dies at the moment he accepts the existence of God. His death is particularly spectacular, as he is 'split apart from his adam's apple to his groin' (Rushdie 1988: 507). His death recalls the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad as a heretic in Dante's *Inferno* who, as Edward Said

remarks, is 'being endlessly cleft in two from his chin to his anus' (Said, 1978: 68). Rushdie rewrites a recurring Orientalist image of Muhammad as a profound religious experience, turning a derogatory image into a symbol of faith.

The wayward passage of mutation is the fulcrum for the model of history negotiated in *The Satanic Verses* against the hegemony of existing discourses. Mutation is double-edged. The power of existing discourses is figured in the mutations that Gibreel and Saladin suffer. They bear witness to the manichean vision of the Imam that divides the world into categories of good and evil, and figure the process of subjectification produced by colonial discourses. But the continual process of mutation is also a mode of resistance. In this way do the migrant characters in the novel occupy the '*present moment of the past*' (Rushdie, 1988: 535). As subjects they occupy positions in hegemonic discourses that perpetuate inequalities of power. Saladin's experiences at the hands of the immigration officers and in the hospital depict the continuing efficacy of derogatory representations of perceived others. As Gibreel's experiences with Rosa testified, the position of migrants within dominant modes of representation is linked to a colonial history. The discourses of the past remain in the present. This contributes to the pain of migrancy. Furthermore, the new possibilities created by migrancy are contextualised by the power of these discourses. This attention to the present moment of the past reveals the extent to which existing discourses still function as agents of power. Strategies of resistance in the present are negotiated in the context of the perpetuation of discourses from the past. For this reason, the novel moves a stage beyond that reached in *Midnight's Children*. In that novel, the chance of new possibility specifically for the Indian nation was deemed to have been lost. Its idea survived only in the utopian gesture of a superabundant narrative form. *The Satanic Verses* testifies to the continuing possibility of transformation that is not vanquished in the face of hegemonic discourses by pointing to the value of appropriation. Hegemonic narratives that construct images of the other (devils, animals) must be squarely confronted and contested. The novel depicts part of the process of change as interrupting the symbolic resources of hegemonic narratives, denying them a crucial fixity. Change does not take place in Baudrillard's space of political vacuum, but in a realm of competing perspectives. The novel emphasises the narrator's point that 'a history is not so easily shaken off' (Rushdie, 1988). But in so doing, it points to

strategies that enable the migrant to contest that history, rather than remaining locked inside its economy of representation.

Formal innovation in Rushdie's novels operates as an important mode of oppositional critique. *Midnight's Children* preserves of the idea of the superabundant nation at the level of form. Its depiction of the failure of this nation to materialise is offset by Saleem's adventurous narrative. The condemnation of the nation is mounted from a particular position that values the principles of plurality and heterogeneity. Like Nietzsche's definition of critical history, the novel depicts the state of the post-colonial Indian nation in order to show 'how greatly this thing deserves to perish' (Nietzsche, 1983: 76). But the values that inform this judgement are not questioned. Saleem is a postmodern narrator only so far. His narrative displays a postmodern delight in complicating reference. But it does not hold the values of superabundance and multiplicity up for question. Multiplicity is also a mode of resistance in *Shame*. As a consequence of translation, multiple ways of seeing are revealed that challenge the unitary language of the state. The brigandly passage of *sharam* through the text reveals in its complex rhetoricity an apparatus of oppression, and offers a mode of resistance to its hegemony. The brigandry of utterance acts to judge and condemn the covering up of other voices by the palimpsest of a unitary language. *The Satanic Verses* defies the fixity required by specific hegemonic discourse through the errancy of mutation - of the sign, of the self, of received narratives - amounts to a repudiation of the symbolic resources of both the Imam and the Empire. By representing in the present recurring moments from the past, the novel breaks with teleological and linear models of history in favour of the endless and perfidious mobility of mutation. In the context of this novel, Nietzsche's comment critical history 'tramples over every kind of piety' (Nietzsche, 1983: 76) seems particularly apposite. Pitted against the Imam's quest for the pure realm of 'timeless time' is the errancy of mutation without *telos*. Unfortunately for Rushdie, his opposition to religious piety has resulted in his sentence of death and his enforced hiding. In Rushdie's fiction we see figured the possibilities unleashed by a critical historiography that mobilises narrative innovation for the purposes of oppositional critique. The effectiveness of Rushdie's profuse fiction can be best grasped in the context of the history about

which he writes, and the position from where he writes. Without this awareness, the impact of his errant historiographies cannot be approached adequately.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis I used Spivak's notion of 'negotiation' as a way of approaching the specificity of the fiction I have examined. Spivak's negotiator works from within something in order to effect change. In my reading of the fiction of J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie, I have focused in particular upon their resistance to conventional models of history from various positions that could be deemed 'inside'. Their work is tethered to the crisis of the grand narratives of the West, and in part emerges from the 'changes to history' claimed by theorists of postmodernism. These novelists, I have argued, often oppose conventional models of history in order to construct a new historiography alert to cultural difference. Conventional histories are often repudiated as the products of those in positions of power. Postmodernism offers one means of repudiation. It emphasises that an objective view of the past cannot ever be made fully present in language. These novelists engage with postmodernism to challenge representations of the past. Such engagements must be understood in the context of the particular historical trajectories that form the focus of these varied fictions, and I have explored the historical specificity of these texts for this purpose. For example, I noted that Mo's critique of conventional historiography in *An Insular Possession* is part of the displacement of a colonialist epistemology that represented the Chinese in a particular way. Rushdie's exuberant attempt to break the objectivity of historical narration in *Midnight's Children* connects with his concern to preserve the idea of India as a secular and heterogeneous nation, where all voices are equally legitimate. Both writers mobilise postmodernist narrative strategies for purposes that, although not dissimilar, are culturally specific. In this conclusion I do not wish to homogenise the negotiations I have examined, as this would deny the importance of historical specificity. But I believe that several points can be made about the particular juncture of contemporary fiction that has been the focus of this thesis, especially as regards the attitudes towards postmodernism that have emerged from my readings of these texts.

The fundamental assumptions of postmodernist critiques of conventional historiography are a source of anxiety for these writers. Many of the texts I have explored are caught between

two contrary positions. On the one hand they open up history to multiple interpretations, but on the other they also attempt to tether historical narratives securely to the referent. No individual novelist fully embraces postmodernism as inherently valuable. Many of the novels I have examined are, to varying degrees, ambivalent about the supposed productivity of the postmodernist critique of history. Attitudes to postmodernism range from muted enthusiasm to pronounced hostility. However, I think it is productive to gather the range of attitudes we have encountered into three groups. In the first, postmodernist modes of representation are attacked for their ability to undermine oppositional critique. Linda Hutcheon's point that postmodernism is 'politically ambivalent' (Hutcheon, 1991: 168) is a particular cause for concern in certain novels. These writers share a sense of postmodernism's recuperative propensity. Farrell's *Troubles* is marked by an anxiety about the possible negation of the referent effected by the postmodernist conception of history as primarily the product of representation. Its dual temporalities create a dissonance that bears witness to this anxiety. Mo and Ishiguro focus upon the responsibility of postmodernist modes of representation in the perpetuation of reactionary ideologies. *The Redundancy of Courage* examines the negation of critique that results from Ng's attempt to make visible the history of colonised Danu to an audience accustomed to consuming historical simulacra. *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* are particularly fraught examples of such trepidation about postmodernism. These novels foreground the extent to which history as 'imaginary elaboration' can recuperate a discredited ideology. Even Rushdie's enthusiastic engagement with postmodernism is tempered in *Midnight's Children* by an attention to the damage Saleem causes by 'rearranging history' (Rushdie, 1981: 260). Postmodernism might be one strategy of critique, but it is not free from co-option. These novelists remain sensitive to the politically ambivalent propensity of the 'changes in history' that result from postmodernist aesthetics.

But postmodernism is not rejected entirely, because it can support critical projects. Postmodernism remains a mode of possibility. There is a second group of texts that suggest postmodernism can be an useful tool in dismantling conventional historiography from within. Postmodernism seems most productive when it functions parasitically, working to dismantle received historiography from the inside. In particular, those texts that mobilise parody

exemplify this point, such as *The Siege of Krishnapur*, *The Singapore Grip*, and *An Insular Possession*. In these novels, dominant forms of representation are parodied in an attempt to expose the ideological concerns they perpetuate. Received images of the Indian Mutiny and the colonisation of Hong Kong are unavoidably tropological, and these novels invite the reader to mistrust the referentiality of conventional representations. One particularly important consequence of these texts is their foregrounding of representation as a material agent. Colonialist epistemology requires the dissemination of symbolic resources that codify the propriety of colonialism. A critical history is created by the interruption of these symbolic resources. Adapting Nietzsche's phrase, these texts take a knife to their roots to show how much conventional representations deserve to perish. But problems remain that concern the extent to which this critique from within bears witness to those silenced by received histories. The interruption of colonialist epistemology is not total; nor does it necessarily guarantee that hitherto silenced voices will be heard as a consequence. For example, some of the colonial subjects that appear in Farrell's work remain locked inside colonialist epistemology. Farrell struggles to open a space that accommodates cultural difference. Hari and the Prime Minister slip out of the Collector's view across the battleground of the Indian landscape, and Vera Chiang also vanishes without trace. Similarly, in *An Insular Possession* the voices of the colonised Chinese remain muted. We bear witness to their existence only at those moments when they disrupt the dominant mode of representation, such as Ah Cheong's appearance with the chamber-pot in Walter Eastman's painting of the crew of the *Nemesis*. But the perspectives of the colonised Chinese are never made available. The rewritings of history in these novels emerge from within the dominant mode, and confine themselves to the received representations common to colonialist epistemology. Postmodernist strategies do create critical histories from within, but there are limits to what their critique can achieve. These parodic texts do not guarantee that colonised subjects will be freed from the constraints of Western epistemology through the mobilisation of postmodernist narrative strategies.

The third group of texts assert the importance of discovering new models of history that can supersede conventional historiography. They go one stage further than the texts discussed immediately above. Of particular relevance to this group are Mo's *Sour Sweet* and Rushdie's

The Satanic Verses. These novels produce new models of history that emerge from the experience of migrancy. In both, the relationship between past and present is reconfigured. A linear model of history is succeeded by a new form of history that functions as a strategy of survival. *Sour Sweet* depicts the constant negotiation between past learning and present contingency in the lives of Lily and Mui Chen. The past is accessed critically and dynamically in order to meet immediate challenges. The result is a strategy of survival that can be explained with recourse to Bhabha's idea of the 'past-present' (Bhabha, 1994: 7). In this model of history, revisiting the past becomes 'part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living' (Bhabha, 1994: 7). Such 'changes in history' recall the repudiation of linearity in postmodernist critiques of conventional history. Rushdie's idea of the 'present moment of the past' is very similar. This model of history emphasises the continuing hegemony of coercive epistemologies. It suggests a strategy of survival that involves putting existing representations to new uses. The mobility of language becomes of paramount importance, and is emphasised by the attention to the errant mutation of languages that refuses fixed meaning. These novels effect critical histories because they propose alternative *forms* of history; they do not just disassemble existing historiography. A critical relationship between the past and the present, one that denies linearity, provides a tool for survival and contestation. Indeed, Rushdie's fiction in particular emphasises historical form as a mode of critique. The errant historiographies he formulates attempt to remain alert to the existence of many different voices. The heterogeneity of *Midnight's Children* and the errant translations of *Shame* keep alive the possibilities of multiple historical perspectives by opposing unitary languages.

But there remains a fracture between the promised *possibility* of alternative histories and the extent to which these histories are made available. In making this point, I am led to suspect the confidence of Bhabha's assertion of a postcolonial space at the cusp of the postmodern critique of the West's grand narratives where dissonant, dissident histories emerge. The writers I have examined all on occasions perceive a space at the limits of holistic, totalising forms of knowledge tethered to the West, where conventional hierarchies of cultural difference might lose their efficacy. But no single text ever quite reaches this liminal space. Collectively, the novels struggle to different degrees in attempting to reach this space of possibility. In the

fiction, this space is figured both physically and as an imaginary concept. Physical spaces include The Great World fair in *The Singapore Grip* and the location of the Chens' take-away in *Sour Sweet*. Imaginary spaces include the possibilities promised by the end of aristocratic paternalism in *The Remains of the Day* and the excitement of newness epitomised by the Midnight Children's conference in *Midnight's Children*. These spaces are not identical, and have a specificity to them that results from the particular historical context that concerns each novelist. Nevertheless, I believe each promises possibilities created beyond the hegemony of dominant forms of knowledge that occupy a position on the cusp of 'complex cultural and political boundaries' (Bhabha, 1994: 173). These writers share Bhabha's sentiment that the 'epistemological "limits" of those ethnocentric ideas [of the West's grand narratives] are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories' (Bhabha, 1994: 4-5). But that space is extremely fragile, and under constant threat. In *The Singapore Grip* and *The Remains of the Day* it exists as a possibility not yet realised, one eliminated in the short term by dominant forces. In Farrell's text that force is the invading Japanese. For Ishiguro, the end of a paternalist version of 'Englishness' brings disillusionment rather than possibility, where the promise of a new future is thwarted by an approaching postmodernity. More optimistic explorations of this new space of possibility where Western epistemology breaks down can be found in *Sour Sweet* and *The Satanic Verses*. Mo's novel reveals the continual strategies of survival required to keep coercive forces from impinging upon the Chens' space. But they are never completely held at a remove, and they continue to influence the Chens' lives. The novel ultimately accentuates the frailty of the Chens' space. *The Satanic Verses* pits the errancy and mobility of mutation against the fixity required by religious and colonial discourses, and constitutes a strategy of survival. But the novel points up the continuing agency of such coercive forces, and questions the extent to which ethnocentric forms of knowledge remain legitimate at the traditional colonial centre. Rushdie may fashion a space of resistance where dominant discourses are repudiated, but it is not yet a space of freedom. Western epistemology still has an effective agency, one that continues the tethering of its perceived others to coercive modes of representation. These tethers are not easily broken.

In the work of the writers I have examined, critical histories are certainly negotiated. But their critical efficacy is limited. These writers are plagued by anxieties concerning the 'changes in history' effected by postmodernism. Their work casts some doubt upon postmodernism's productivity. Consequently, in these texts Bhabha's liminal space of possibility exists more as a promise than an actuality, a fragile location that has yet to be opened fully. The novelists' intent to rewrite history so as to thwart the efficacy of conventional models of history is not totally successful. For this reason, the particular juncture of contemporary fiction I have explored recalls the exhibition 'Into the Heart of Africa'. As Hutcheon argued, the exhibition failed to realise its 'good intentions' (Hutcheon, 1994: 208) in its attempt to produce a critical history through postmodernist modes of representation. The writers I have examined have similar 'good intentions'. They take a knife to the roots of conventional history in order to repudiate some of the fundamental assumptions behind received models of history, focusing in particular on the relations between history and the maintenance of power. But their acceptance of the 'changes in history' effected by postmodernism complicates their critical process, and at times their work turns into a critique of postmodernism itself. There remains a slippage between these writers' critical projects and the means they use to achieve them, one that is comparable to the failure of 'Into the Heart of Africa' to guarantee the rewriting of history it proposed. The range of negotiations that emerge from these novels makes them, I believe, one of the most exciting junctures of recent fiction. But the anxieties that result from these rewritings of history suggest that the confluence of the postmodern and the postcolonial creates a series of unresolved tensions that complicates the negotiation of critical histories.

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