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Fragments and Intergenerational Trauma in (Post) Postcolonialism

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Abstract

The research takes an intersectional feminist approach and is presented in three chapters and a poetry collection. It emerged from a sense of limitation that is, demonstrably, grounded in the socio-political and cultural frameworks of the West that have informed my experiences and perspectives. Entrenched in behaviours and values, these frameworks appear universal as I look beyond Western parameters and towards the Global South. The research aims begin with the unearthing and deconstruction of unconscious biases that are embedded in socio-linguistic frameworks and perpetuate the marginalisation and precarity of groups in the context of decolonisation and the legacy of empire. And yet, with the white-Western consciousness as the benchmark against which difference is measured this aim fails to recognise the self/other binary. It is this difficulty of challenging the dominant discourse from within that drives the thesis. While the research uses psychoanalytical and trauma theories in its consideration of the unconscious, I look to postcolonial theory to understand whether these Western approaches can be re-thought to acknowledge the variousness of human experience. I trace the phenomenological living of intergenerational trauma and survivals (as ritual) through works by H.D., Hope Mirrlees and Una Marson writing in the inter/post-World War years, alongside poems by Sandeep Parmar and Anthony Capildeo, who are engaging with contemporary intersectional feminism. My own creative practice responds to and impacts the direction of critical thinking through its experimentation with unconscious connections and (un)intelligibility. These ideas are brought into a framework that has the potential to resist the processes of othering and in search of decolonisation through a new dynamic discourse; one with the capacity to be responsive to the plurality of selfhoods and the traumatic legacy of global history.

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Introduction[1]

The research project, presented here in three chapters and a poetry collection, emerged from a sense of limitation. The limitation was my own, a feeling of being blinkered by the socio-political, cultural and philosophical frameworks that have informed my experience of the world and underpinned my perspective. These frameworks are entrenched in my behaviour and values, and, as such, appear universal to me. They are unquestioned as I look at the world beyond Western parameters, even as I congratulate myself on being tolerant of difference. To be "tolerant" of multiculturalism announces the entitlement that pervades my worldview. Such an "unexamined multiculturalism" is what Ritu Birla describes as a reduction of postcolonialism that leads to "colonialism [becoming] a thing of the past, an unproblematized past that grounds homogeneous 'postcolonial' identity and identitarianism". This, Birla says, is what led Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to conclude that "the term 'post-colonial' has 'bitten the dust'"[2]. Without intention[3], I have

[1] Referencing throughout the thesis broadly follows Harvard style, with the exception that in-text citations have been moved into footnotes to improve the flow for the reader.

[2] 2010, p. 87.

[3] Intentionality in Spivak's essay on "Echo" will be considered later in the thesis: "Spivak offers her readers the ethical instantiation that is Echo's: the potential undoing of Narcissus's self-fixation. For Ovid's Echo is staged 'as the instrument of the possibility of a truth not dependent upon intention'" (Landry and MacLean 1996, p. 176). Perhaps this independent truth is similar to Denise Riley's formulation of the unconscious as language, separable from the speaker's intention (2000, p. 5). My anxiety results from a peripheral awareness of how the language expresses more than I am able to control, and that this will communicate unconscious prejudices. My conscious argument about why this worries me is that it contributes to maintaining those prejudices as societal norms. My unacknowledged motivation may well be less altruistic. That is, an anxiety about being vulnerable to/in language, my shame exposed on the page.

stumbled into an uncomfortable awareness of my own privilege, accompanied not necessarily by a moral imperative to correct this. I do not claim to be good, which would only maintain me within the contingencies of culturally specific moral codes. I was unaware of Spivak's assertion that we – that is, those with a political, economic and educational privilege – should reframe our advantages as losses. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean suggest this is elementary to Spivak's writing. Our prejudices are "learned, but now seemingly instinctual, responses": "We can unlearn [racism], and unlearn it precisely because our assumptions about race represent a closing down of creative possibility, a loss of other options, other knowledge"[4]. The research will take a broadly deconstructive approach towards the constitution of the other and the dualism of colonial logic, to open up the potential for other, decentred knowledge. My aim is not to offer a formula for postcolonial healing, but to contribute to a decolonising conversation through an engagement with creative possibilities.

The evolution of postcolonialism, as Neil Lazarus discusses, begins with a historical moment[5]. With the collapse of the various Western empires, liberation has been confused with an equality of independence and access to resources. But as Birla's examination of Spivak tells us, the historical moment that puts colonialism in the past contrasts with much of contemporary postcolonial criticism and its attention "to present and ongoing colonial formations, to the failure of decolonization, and the uncanny reincarnations of colonial relations alongside new transnational flows of humans and capital"[6]. As Lazarus summarises:

> In the wake of the invasion and, evidently, the long-term destabilisation of Iraq, [it is the task of postcolonial theorists] to take central cognisance of

[4] 1996, p. 4.

[5] 2011, p. 11.

[6] 2010, p. 87.

> the unremitting actuality and indeed the intensification of imperialist social relations in the times and spaces of the postcolonial world[7].

The critical-creative format of my project provides a bidirectional approach to the socio-political challenges underpinning the "task" as Lazarus puts it. For me, this began with the responsibility of writing, but has developed as the significance of the unconscious emerged in relation to ongoing intergenerational trauma in postcolonial narratives. To approach these challenges across the two research modes allows for both the critical examination to impact my writing, but also for theoretical complexities to play out through the experimentation in my creative practice. Connections made in the unconscious processes of that experimentation, then, inform the direction of study. The writers I study here represent a range of historical moments, backgrounds and perspectives. I have followed Spivak in her assertion that subalternity is gendered[8] and, though the writers and their protagonists are neither all female nor all subaltern, the criteria of my research are not founded on, and implicitly challenge, any masculinist perspective. The texts include H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* and Sandeep Parmar's *Eidolon*, in Chapter One, which asks whether bilocation and preverbal language can underpin an intersectional approach to intergenerational trauma through literary and racial inheritance. In Chapter Two, I consider how various configurations of a collective unconscious and functional neurological disorder express the legacy of empire through *Paris: a poem*, by Hope Mirrlees, and *Measures of Expatriation*, by Vahni (now Anthony) Capildeo. Using strategies applied in the previous chapters, Chapter Three explores the socio-political and cultural implications of intergenerational trauma through the socialisation of the colonial subject in Una Marson's third play, *Pocomania*[9] .

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[7] 2011, p. 17.

[8] This is Spivak's assertion throughout "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (2010).

[9] Doolittle, 1974 (originally published 1961); Parmar, 2015; Mirrlees, 2020 (originally 1920); Capildeo, 2016; Marson, 2017 (originally 1938).

An overview of the literature informing my approach begins with two pamphlets. Don Mee Choi's *Translation is a Mode = Translation is an Anti-neocolonial Mode* delineates the historical and political intentions of language in relation to post-war Korea and ongoing US imperialism[10]. She invokes Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, to underpin her representation of how, "in a neocolonial zone", whatever mother tongue she might have had has been usurped by the "dominant language"[11]. Her title references Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator", whose concept of how the translator must break through "decayed barriers of his own language" to allow the foreign language to affect his own, suggests a decentred dynamic where the dominant language makes space for the intention of the original. This resonates with Spivak's approach to the subaltern, that it is not the subaltern that must be represented but for those with privilege to re-present ourselves. The second pamphlet informing the project is *Threads* by Sandeep Parmar, Nisha Ramayya and Bhanu Kapil[12]. Parmar discusses the assumptions underpinning the British lyric, its universality. It is a different context to Frantz Fanon's experience of travelling from the French colony of Martinique to Lyon, but the discontinuity Parmar experiences on returning to England and encountering the lyric "I", speaking from "within a kind of integrated knowingness and belonging", is reminiscent of Fanon's experience, which will inform our understanding of double consciousness[13]. Parmar discusses the nostalgia and fixity that "[disempowers] the lyric present as a site of resistance or structural social change"[14], and this question of identification with the lyric "I" and its tendency towards stasis can be thought of alongside Choi's thoughts on translation, as well as Denise Riley's work on the

[10] 2020.

[11] 2020, p. 5: Don Mee Choi is referencing *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

[12] 2018.

[13] W.E.B. Du Bois first wrote about double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk,* published in 1903.

[14] 2018, pp. 9-13.

subject, especially in *The Words of Selves*[15]. Capildeo's *Skin Can Hold*[16] also offers an opportunity to rethink the lyric through its performative experimentation. Kapil's contribution to *Threads* includes a "trauma loop", where the assumptions of a "kind, white poet" demonstrate the political implications of the social norms it invokes: "but I can't cope with the unbroken trust - in poetry, in the economics of a household, in family life - that circulates through every part of what she is telling me"[17]. In her single-author title, *Ban en Banlieue*[18], Kapil is also working with racialised, patriarchal trauma and bodily markings of (un)belonging and (in)visibility. The writing is bloodied with literal violence, and while this is powerful, urgent and needed, my own tendencies have been towards the more covert structures of socialisation implicated in the "trauma loop" that makes the literal violence possible[19].

It was Parmar's interest in H.D. and Mirrlees that led me to *Helen in Egypt* and *Paris*. In her "Afterword" to *Eidolon*, Parmar quotes the end of Virginia Woolf's essay, "On Not Knowing Greek"[20], which, Parmar says, implies the knowledge "that every future rises as a ghost of the

[15] 2000.

[16] 2019.

[17] 2018, pp. 63-64.

[18] 2015.

[19] Other contemporary writing that informs my thinking with regards to the dislocations of the postcolonial female subject: Capildeo's *No Traveller Returns* (2003); *Utter* (2013); *Odyssey Calling* (2020); *Like a Tree, Walking* (2021); Claudia Rankine, *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* (2017[originally published in 2004); *Citizen* (2015 [Originally in 2014]); Tishani Doshi, *Everything Begins Elsewhere* (2012); Sujatta Bhatt, *Collected Poems* (2013).

[20] Her essay is collected in *The Common Reader* published in 1925 by Hogarth Press.

past"[21]. It is this idea that she invokes in her afterword to *Paris,* where she says: "*Paris* has an extraordinary way of conveying many superimposed cities at once, implying that, like a ruin, the modern city is merely the aggregate of newness destroyed in perpetuity"[22]. In her introduction to Mirrlees's *Collected Poems*, she considers the fragmentation of the lyric "I" as "the breaking down of identity and individual experience in favour of the life of the city", which she characterises as "a liberation from personality and personal history"[23]. The plurality of the city and the move away from individual experience suggest the influence of Jane Harrison on the poem, in relation to the collective feeling Harrison identifies in ritual performance. Sean Pryor[24] also emphasises the collective experience he sees in *Paris*, but the fragmented "I" may also indicate the mutability of the personal gaze. Dorothy McMillan links this with Mirrlees's own allusion to the kaleidoscope[25]. Both Mirrlees and H.D. wrote in response to war and they both offer insight into their own influences. While Mirrlees's relationship with Harrison was formative, H.D. mines her interest in psychoanalysis and interactions with Sigmund Freud in *Tribute to Freud*[26], and her concept of the "over-mind"[27], which Albert Gelpi[28] sees as the development of ideas H.D. would later realise in *Helen in Egypt*. For H.D. the over-mind is located beyond the body, but its womb-like space seems to pre-empt the Kristevan chora, and this is a connection explored by several writers. Susan

[21] 2015, p. 65.

[22] In Mirrlees, 2020, p. 57.

[23] Mirrlees & Parmar, 2011, p. xlii.

[24] 2019.

[25] 2019, article number 184.

[26] Doolittle, 1985 (originally published in 1956).

[27] Doolittle, 1982, p. 17.

[28] In his Introduction to H.D.'s *Notes on Thoughts and Vision* (1982).

Stanford Friedman[29], Margaret Homans[30], Rachel Blau DuPlessis[31], Deborah Kelly Kloepfer[32] and Susan Edmunds[33] develop their arguments around H.D.'s use and disruption of binaries and generic conventions. Friedman and DuPlessis consider the structure of *Helen in Egypt* as anti-epic or feminised epic, thereby, undermining the patriarchal norms of form. Kloepfer and Homans focus on H.D.'s interrogation of the mother figure and mother/daughter dyad. Homans moves away from the Kristevan model, which she says, assumes the child is always male, to turn Kristevan linguistic repression into suppression. This distinction will become significant in my thinking about the transformations of Helen-Isis/Helen-Thetis.

Compared to the plethora of writing around H.D., critical engagement with Marson is more difficult to find. Alison Donnell's work to establish a forum for Caribbean literature and Marson's significant contribution to British and Caribbean culture includes her editorship of Marson's *Selected Poems* for Peepal Tree Press[34], along with research that places Marson's work within its socio-political context. Contextual writings around black modernism inform my engagement with Marson[35]. Her anti-racism activism and BBC broadcasts, not only promoting Caribbean voices but

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[29] 1986; 1987; 1990.

[30] 1986.

[31] 1979; 1986; 1986a.

[32] 1989.

[33] 1991; 1994.

[34] 2011a.

[35] Nancy Cunard (ed.) *Negro : an anthology* (1979 [originally published in1934]); David Gosse, "Garvey's Black Theology and Its Impact on the UNIA/ACL" (2016); Fred Moten, *In the Break: the aesthetics of the black radical tradition* (2003); Cherene Sherrard-Johnson, *Portraits of the New Negro Woman: Visual and Literary Culture in the Harlem Renaissance* (2007); Ula Taylor, *The*

also the diversity of people working for the war effort, in *Hello! West Indies*[36], provide insight into her political stance. More recent projects include Kate Dossett's archival research at the British Library[37], where she examined the "Lord Chamberlain's Plays", written by black writers, including Marson, whose plays were staged both in Jamaica and London. A recent staging of *Pocomania* in Peckham attracts the criticism of having Victorian, dated values, speculating on its unfinished status and what could have been[38]. But the BBC documentary, *Una Marson: Our Lost Caribbean Voice*[39], places her as the radical woman she was. Michael McMillan credits Marson as the first to break "the tradition of writing in perfect conditioned English by using Creole" in *Pocomania*[40], and Jean Small describes *Pocomania* as a "Jamaican classic' that is "embedded in the culture of the folk"[41]. Dermot Daly writes on Marson's first play, *At What Price*[42], in the context of black theatre, censorship and Britishness[43]. And Lisa Tomlinson argues that Marson was one of a few Caribbean writers that introduced a pan-African attitude into her work, which encouraged Afro-Jamaican people to "define culture on their own terms"[44]. Tomlinson considers the focus on developing,

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veiled Garvey: the life & times of Amy Jacques Garvey (2002); Lisa Tomlinson, *The African-Jamaican Aesthetic: cultural retention and transformation across borders* (2017).

[36] BFI, 1943.

[37] 2021.

[38] Michael Scott-Harding, 2023.

[39] BBC, 2022. Written by Emma Dennis Edwards. Directors: Avril E. Russell and Topher Campbell.

[40] 2004, p. 59.

[41] 2001, p. 30.

[42] Written in 1931 and currently unpublished.

[43] 2024.

[44] 2017, p. 30.

celebrating or exploring an Afro-Jamaican aesthetic in Marson's writing, even as she writes as a member of the diaspora, and though this would be a simplistic overview of the intersectional issues Marson explores in her work, we might think about her two major plays as a kind of bilocation, written with audiences in mind, specific to metropole, in the case of *London Calling*[45], and colony, with *Pocomania*. The politics of the pan-Africanism influencing Marson, in 1930s London, and her feminism come together in *Pocomania*, as Anna Snaith discusses. She says, "Marson is interested here in creolization and syncretism, the fusion of cultural forms and languages brought about by slavery, a fusion which […] constitutes the Caribbean's modernity"[46]. This interest in syncretism brings us back to H.D.'s approach, and the fusion of Helen-Isis. Though Helen and Stella might be thought of as being on opposing sides of the colonial coin, they are both socialised as western women, both drawn to an alterity that is within and around them. The legacy of empire, war and decolonisation impacts Marson, Mirrlees and H.D. from different angles. Considering them together offers an opportunity to read across race and the Atlantic during a period of global instability that continues to impact contemporary writers.

The first chapter begins with *Helen in Egypt*, a book-length poem that places Helen at the centre of her story, and it is championed in terms of both its creative beauty and feminist writing. The bilocation of a Greek demi-goddess in both Egypt and Troy is central to my analysis and explores the East/West binary underpinning my argument[47]. But one aspect that will become clear in this

[45] Marson, 2017.

[46] 2014, p. 165.

[47] The East/West binary and invocation of Western values might suggest a confrontation between two monolithic populations. And yet, I do not intend this terminology to reflect identity. H.D. demonstrates a feminist empathy and solidarity with Isis, and if she does not fully overcome the contingencies of her own socialisation, I do not argue for a unity within Western feminism. When

reading is how Western values that define the West in opposition to the peripheries, or Global South, are subconscious in H.D.'s writing. That while H.D. is radical in breaking down patriarchal norms, in trying to celebrate Isis, and Helen's black ancestry, the poem, in effect, effaces her. This may be expected given the generational differences between first-wave feminism and contemporary perspectives, which also reflect some of the generational differences regarding empire and decolonisation. While feminism and abolitionism share a history, they did not necessarily share parity in their pursuit of rights[48]. And while H.D. demonstrates concern for racial difference, it is demonstrable that the reader is aligned with the perspective of the white woman, that her rights are privileged above those of Isis. An intersectional approach, then, is needed, to explore the complexities of discrimination that impede the pursuit of social justice[49]. But it is also a problem of

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Denise Riley suggests: "The more rigorously I adhere to my own name, the less empathetic interest I'll extend" (2000, p. 177), I think of how H.D. animates Helen, loosening her attachment to her own identity in the process. Isis' identity seems distant, carved in mythological stone. If Isis cannot move (cannot speak) beyond her cultural/historical boundaries, her identity remains fixed, to the potential detriment of solidarity.

[48] Clare Midgley, writing on abolitionism and feminism in the 19th Century, describes how Mary Wollstonecraft's condemnation of slavery, and the analogies she makes between "women and slaves", did not lead her to become active in abolitionist campaigns. Midgley also describes how some abolitionists, while accepting that women "formed part of the anti-slavery public", did not adopt Wollstonecraft's "egalitarian language in appealing for women's support". Instead, they maintained a "conservative" stance, "stressing women's distinctive feminine qualities and duties [as] moral guardians" (1993, p. 345).

[49] Spivak's intersectional approach in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" pre-dates the term "Intersectionality", coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw's interests begin with the marginalisation of black women within a range of discourses, including anti-discriminatory law,

writing in English. Western values are embedded in the language I speak, a language that is privileged in global dynamics, a legacy of colonialism, empire and war. In Parmar's response to H.D., *Eidolon* has Helen relocated to California, but here her silence is not, or not only, the erasure Isis suffers. Where Spivak announces that the subaltern cannot speak, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan points out that it is not that the subaltern is silent but that she is read in line with pre-existing assumptions. In fact, while Spivak suggests silence is unavoidable for the subaltern, it can also be agentive[50]. In *Eidolon*, I will argue, Helen's silence, potentially, resists the call of interpellation and refuses the capitalist structures that underpinned colonialism[51]. While H.D.'s Helen offers us a way

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feminism and antiracism. But the nature of intersectionality is that "the theory is never done, nor exhausted by its prior articulations or movements" (Devon W. Carbado *et al*. 2013, p. 304). And so, though this thesis primarily focuses on gendered and racial identities, further research is needed to fully explore how these texts perpetuate and/or challenge class and heteronormative assumptions embedded in patriarchal structures that compound the struggle towards social justice.

[50] "Friday of Coetzee's *Foe*, who resists every attempt at decipherment of his 'writing' […] 'is not only a victim, but also an agent' because of his successful withholding of his secret" (Sunder Rajan, 2010, p. 121). Sunder Rajan notes that, while "Friday" is identified as "native" and other, he is nowhere identified as "subaltern". It is, Sunder Rajan suggests, the failure of speech rather than its absence that aligns with Spivak's formulation of subalternity and the impossibility of speech. So, if Helen's silence is taken to be successful, she cannot be, or is no longer, subaltern. Alternatively, I have fallen into the pitfall Spivak is warning us against by attributing the intention of resistance to Helen's silence. I am assuming the ability to speak for her, and thereby, I continue to contribute to her silencing.

[51] Though we might think of silence as active resistance, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok would consider Helen's silence as a phantom with the potential to pass her trauma unconsciously to the next generation (1994).

to deal directly with unconscious western solutions, even as she seeks resolution and a move away from war in her transformation, *Eidolon* demonstrates that war and the legacy of colonialism is not in the past, not resolved, but ongoing and normalised under the Western gaze and the mechanisms of globalisation[52].

My own heritage is Anglo-Indian. I am marked by this legacy in ways that are both visible and not, conscious and not. Growing up in Sheffield, I understood that I was not the same as the rest of my school, and so I considered whether talcum powder could make me appear more acceptable, more white. I cultivated a Yorkshire accent, and asked for egg and chips at home, because that's what my friend's mum gave me. This to say, I was raised within a white-European consciousness, a dominant discourse that conditioned me to reject the other that was both all around and already inside me. The processes of othering are continuous within the contemporary European subjectivity. The end of empire and decolonisation is not fully realised through nationalism. In fact, as Birla suggests, an "anti-colonial nationalism, where an investment in all that is 'native' and 'authentic' serves to reproduce colonial logics of othering"[53]. The structures that underpinned the colonialists' dominance are embedded not only in the infrastructures of social order, consciously, in structural adjustment programmes, but also, to some extent, subconsciously in the colonised populations themselves. A person may not identify themselves as constituted as other, and this becomes clear in Chapter Three, through Marson's play, *Pocomania.* The Jamaican middle-class characters privilege their Englishness over their African ancestry, internalising colonial assumptions, a process I will

[52] Globalisation is "The New Empire" for Spivak: it is "a return to the roots of imperialism's relationship to capitalism where 'free trade' agreements became the norm for conducting business". Capitalism becomes imperialism and "global financialization carries on that relay" (Jill Didur and Teresa Heffernan, 2003, p. 4).

[53] 2010, p. 88.

explore through Fanon's experiences of double consciousness in *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally published in 1952. And although H.D.'s figuring of Helen-Thetis/Helen-Isis may be read as positioning the other in service to the self, *Helen in Egypt* does use this construction to recognise the trace of the other within. Such recognition breaks down the contingencies of perspective, creating the potential to interrupt the perpetuation of inequality and precarity created and maintained by neocolonialism.

As mentioned, the first chapter centres on Helen, who, in H.D.'s rendering, has been whisked away to Egypt. Helen in Troy is a phantom, a double. Reading DuPlessis and Edmunds, whose analyses of *Helen in Egypt* foreground the binaries of the poem, and the readings of the mother/child dyad, leads my own thoughts towards that Kristevan approach to dualism and the generative possibilities of its preverbal semiotics. In turning to the unconscious, there is a risk of falling into a primitivist approach; a discontent with modernity that privileges a return to the archaic mind, might have been appealing in the turbulence of a world at, or between, war(s). Jane Harrison's ethnographic research on ritual very much raises the issue of primitivism[54]. Her formulation of the holophrase/holopsychosis, where language has not developed to separate the subject and the object, creates a difficulty as to how we might separate the modernist interest in, and assumptions about, populations outside the socio-cultural frameworks of Western conventions in ways that could offer insight into these same assumptions. The concept of the holophrase, though, as an entanglement of the self/other binary, is appealing to me. Harrison is interested in collective feeling, and when H.D.'s Helen uses hysteria to connect with Isis, she uses a collective unconscious that also informs my reading of Mirrlees's *Paris*, as she wanders through the Eurocentric narrative embedded in the

[54] 2010.

city's landscape[55]. The ritualistic ceremonies in *Pocomania*, I argue, are also informed by a collective unconscious that stands in for an absent pre-colonial memory. The risk we take in considering the collective memory/unconscious is that it moves the subject into abstract and/or essential terms, which makes possible Freud's equation of the aboriginal with the neurotic's struggle to suppress an incestuous desire[56]. But, if Freud is genealogically formative to this paradigm, it also includes Fanon, whose expression of the collective unconscious rejects essentialism[57]. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok also take a non-essentialist view of the collective unconscious, which for them is an intergenerational haunting, or phantom, an untold secret

[55] The landscape, here, reflects how the metropole seeks to control the global narrative. My counterpoint analysis seeks to recognise the trace of the other within the palimpsest of the city/story. This trace represents a challenge to the assumption of a unidirectional influence of the metropole on its colonies. Laura Tabili describes a turn in academia that "seeks to explore non-Europeans' latitude in shaping imperial systems despite [being subjected to radical power imbalance and violence]" (2007, p. 84). Raewyn Connell describes how the development of social sciences was grounded in the metropole's relationship with its colonies, which "yielded the concept of global difference – the distinction of primitive from advanced". "The distinction of metropole from colony" is that the theorising was "located in the metropole", while data collection occurred in the colonies (2010, pp. 73-74). The metropole controlled the global narrative as well as, and in the service of, controlling economic resources.

[56] In *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 2009, p. 24).

[57] Fanon disputes the Jungian collective unconscious, "bound up with the cerebral structure, the myths and archetypes [as] permanent engrams of the race". Instead, Fanon describes this as "cultural, which means acquired", through "the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group" (2008, p. 145).

unconsciously passed down[58]; and Jacques Derrida and Spivak's incorporation of a Marxist approach allows us to value the collective as resisting the individualism of capitalist hegemony[59]. This, alongside Freud's early thinking around the unconscious and trauma, is the modelling that I want to build on[60].

Trauma in current understanding can be buried in the unconscious, and can express itself physically. Freud's early thoughts around hysteria as a physical manifestation of trauma, as opposed

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[58] "The presence of the phantom indicates the effects, on the descendants, of something that had inflicted narcissistic injury or even catastrophe on the parents" (1994, p. 174).

[59] Key texts underpinning my frame of reference here include: *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1994), translated by Spivak, who in her translator's preface discusses Derrida's engagement with, and dismissal of, Freud, including the Freudian unconscious in terms of Derrida's trace: how both the psyche and the sign are defined by radical alterity. Derrida provides the foundations for thinking about the dualism of colonial logic through bilocation and the double figure of Helen; In *Desire in Language* and *Revolution in Poetic Language* (Kristeva 1981; 1984), Kristeva's model of the mother-child dyad and the generative potential of the chora implies an agentive undercurrent I read as resisting, and/or transforming from within, the dominant discourse; Spivak, including "Can the Subaltern Speak?" originally published in 1998 (2010) and "Echo" (1993), deconstructs privilege, alterity and narcissism.

[60] "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: preliminary communication", by Freud and Joseph Breuer, describes the relationship between early, unacknowledged psychical trauma and physical symptoms, such as tics, parasthesia and non-epileptic attacks (*Studies in Hysteria* 1991). These studies resonate with the current clinical understanding of functional neurological disorder in the UK, and with Bessel van der Kolk's presentation of the neuroscience in *The Body Keeps the Score* (2015).

to his later ideas around masturbation, fantasy and psycho-sexual development, seem akin, or a precursor to, functional neurological disorder (FND). In Chapter Two, we will think about how a physical disability that has no physical aetiology might be read as an emotional response to trauma that may be not only unconscious but intergenerational. What injures a person and how that person absorbs that injury will affect how they raise and (unconsciously) injure their children. What injures and shapes a society may be passed down the generations through socialisation; trauma communicates as language embedded in cultural and socio-political norms and structures. If the collective unconscious feels worryingly close to a primitivist perspective, reframing the links between the past and the present through this more tangible contemporary recognition of intergenerational trauma is an important acknowledgement of the ongoing injustice of empire. I will use a combination of trauma theory, as developed by Cathy Caruth, and criticism of the Eurocentrism of that theory, by Stef Craps, to understand how Capildeo's *Measures of Expatriation* explores the traumatic legacy of colonialism through FND, and how such disability contrasts with the flâneuse of Mirrlees's poem.

Mirrlees's narrator might be considered a stranger to her environment. But the status of strangeness of an English expatriate in Paris observing her surroundings is not equal to the strangerness of Capildeo's speakers, who are often depicted as alien to their surroundings, but are, at times, observed through racial and cultural difference. The recognition of the stranger depends on resemblance to the self. Kristeva, Fanon and Sara Ahmed discuss the stranger in ways that are useful to this analysis bringing together the contemporary experience of intergenerational trauma with the conflicted identity of the transnational and the colonial subject[61]. Ahmed's stranger is both

[61] *Strangers to Ourselves* (Kristeva 1991); *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon [1952] 2008; [1961] 2001); *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism*

near and far, and we see this in each of the chapters. Parmar's Helen is known and yet fragmented, both held close and at arm's length, and it is this duality that defines Sister Kate in *Pocomania*: her role as an abject figure will demarcate the selfhood of those at the centre, or those invested in their colonial identity, by maintaining that boundary through proximity and separation.

Ahmed's exploration of the monitorial school and panopticon help us understand how the colonial subject takes on the role of proxy ruler. This conflicted identity resonates with Fanon's colonial subject who believes himself to be European. Fanon's background in psychoanalysis is helpful in providing a non-white perspective to a white-Western method[62]. David Macey describes Fanon's approach to writing *Black Skin, White Masks* as "*bricolage*"[63], cobbling thoughts together from his reading and walking the streets of Lyon. He read psychoanalytic theory, but also the writers of negritude, and while Fanon's work informs my analysis in Chapter Two, I build on this through the negritude movement, and particularly Reiland Rabaka's criticism of Léopold Senghor in Chapter Three[64]. It is this consideration of black consciousness, alongside Jane Flax's assertion that there is no pre-colonial memory, that gives us potential insight into the characters' behaviour and how colonial structures are perpetuated through colonial subjectivity[65].

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and *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Ahmed 1998; 2000); *Orientalism* – first published in 1978 – and *Culture and Imperialism* (Edward Said 2003; 1994).

[62] Leo Isaac Zeilig locates Fanon's psychology and activism within a decolonising discourse that sees his psychiatric practice as a "technique [towards] psychological freedom" in the context of imperial racism (2017, pp. 93-94).

[63] 2000, p. 162.

[64] 2015.

[65] 2004.

Memory is significant throughout the research. In remembering Isis, H.D. raises questions about the intergenerational haunting of the self by the other, this repressed memory that erupts in the semiotics of the poem. The preverbal is only made available through language and yet it is language that suppresses this mother-child dyadic memory. To recover the other in the language of the dominant discourse is a recurrent problem through this thesis. As Aimé Césaire says, it is "humanity reduced to a monologue"[66]. The inclination to translate the other, to absorb them into this monologue, even in good faith, is often to appropriate the other, the peripheral, in service to the centre. Ahmed discusses this in relation to the ethnographer[67]. The desire to know the other, to explain the other, may only be another means of silencing the other. What I had wanted to identify in these texts is how memory and ritual are alternative forms of communication that are latent and could be allowed to emerge. But the postulate of this wrongly assumes that if these are means of communication, then they are not already communicating. Rather than considering them as latent within the dominant discourse, something to be unearthed, or translated into a form that can be heard within the white-Western consciousness, it is the white-Western consciousness that must rethink itself, beyond the terms of its colonial power dialectic. Returning to Spivak, via Birla, we see that the inadequacy of asserting that the subaltern can speak for themselves is that it "stands in for not doing anything about the problems of oppression", and yet if doing something is "simply speaking 'for' the subaltern [this] also furthers the problem". To rethink, or "re-present ourselves [Spivak] asks us to supplement the benevolent intention of 'speaking for' with an ethics of

[66] 2000, p. 74.

[67] Ahmed's position owes something to Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Both are concerned with deconstructing the privileged knowledge of the European intellectual/ethnographer in relation to their mediation of the European other.

responsibility". That is, the responsibility and "capacity to […] be responsive to the other, without demanding resemblance as the basis of recognition"[68].

To recognise the trace of the other within the self might be thought of in terms of the holophrase, which comes through in Mirrlees's engagement with Harrison's work on ritual as the social practice of collective feeling. Harrison was influenced by Henri Bergson distinguished between a habitual kind of memory and pure memory (memory-images or memory-proper), and theorised how memory-images could animate the pause between perception and action to create the potential for a future not contained in the past[69]. If Mirrlees navigates us through a white-European memory-scape, we become aware of the black consciousness already present within the text through a contrapuntal reading of *Paris*, informed by Edward Said and David Irving's work on counterpoint. But if this Bergsonian idea seems viable only where memory is available, by adapting its framework via Harrison's ritual, the collective unconscious invoked through Pocomania rituals could be considered a proxy for memory-proper; so an Afro-Jamaican population, denied its own history through imperialism, might be able to introduce the unpredictable, the animate, into the gap between perception and action, along with the potential to access a future not contained in the past.

This is always only potential, and none of the writing here claims to be a roadmap towards decolonisation. Spivak's essay on "Echo" traces this potential via Derrida's *différance*, which is Echo's reward, when her punishment fails. She cannot echo Narcissus' words because she is caught between a question and the imperative, "fly from me". Spivak's analysis of Echo as "the same-yet-

[68] 2010, pp. 92-93.

[69] Elizabeth Grosz (2004) and Suzanne Guerlac (2006) inform my understanding of Bergson's thinking.

different"[70] resonates with Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry[71], and where the Anglo-Indian or Afro-Jamaican middle-class may find themselves repeating Western values in a system that creates subjects that are not English but sustain English rule, deconstruction opens the door to exposing the unconscious structures underpinning this mechanism. Pocomania as a religion, as a practice, is a good example of a strategy that is not non-Western, which, as Ashis Nandy argues, is still defined by its relationship to the West[72]. But the Western gaze, in this instance, a Christian gaze, is taken by the subjugated self and returned altered. Pocomania takes Christian stories and icons and adapts them, incorporating elements of African rituals. Can this challenge the primacy and authority of the West, even as the non-West incorporates Western values? As we will see, this echo cannot escape the dualism of colonialism. And yet, it is a process that I am interested in for its potential to destabilise the centre and the self. It is a philosophical idea explored through my creative process. The peripheral and the semiotic may not be accessible without the centre and the symbolic, but the poetic output seeks to reconsider the dynamic that privileges the latter two in dominant discourse, explaining or translating, and thereby effacing, the former. The poems rarely describe circumstances overtly relating to colonialism or race. As the writing developed, it became resistant to language that would quantify and classify the emotional life, but seeks to find linguistic expressions of the complexities of intergenerational trauma without moving them into a language that, as Bergson might argue, can only reduce the heterogeneity of experiential time. The poems perform equivocation, or re-present the self through language that is akin to Derrida's "trace-structure, effacing it even as it presents its legibility"[73]. They aim to destabilise the dominant discourse, even as they necessarily exist within it, in order to listen for the unconscious manifest in

[70] 1993, p. 27.

[71] 2004.

[72] 1988, p. 73.

[73] Spivak, in Derrida, 1994, p. xviii.

fragmentation, ritual and repetition. Repetition, in Denise Riley's writing, is the "initiator of the ironic": what Echo "[re-]presents back is no longer the original utterance [but the word] made strange by the brute fact of its re-presentation"[74]. So, how might we think of this in terms of re-presenting ourselves, as in Spivak's formulation? Becoming strange to ourselves through the "self-reflexiveness"[75] of irony, Riley suggests, is "politically advantageous": "irony is alert to history, that to be able to deploy a category ironically frees you to recognise its historical formation and consequently its potential to alter and disintegrate"[76]. The poems contribute to the research process through their creative engagement with linguistic affect and political potential. They are organised into three sections that broadly correspond, respond to and inform the three chapters. The central problem of my poetic practice is how to create an ethical space that has the capacity to be responsive to the other, through writing that decentres the Western gaze from within the dominant discourse. Each chapter offers philosophical approaches to this. For example, the bilocation and fragmentation of Helen in the first chapter, and the emphasis on the mother-child dyad and pre-verbal, provide "Fairytale: The Purple Iris" with its themes and motifs that navigate the transformations and dislocations of the mother/daughter through the exploration of sound, echolalia, and hauntings. These themes remain in the second section, "Credence", but Bergsonian time adds to our understanding of the past echoing in the present. The novelty, the leap, of the "altered note" in "On Listening to *My Baby's Taking Me Home* by Sparks", offers the animated moment between perception and action the possibility of a future not contained in the past. The last section, "Pheasant", builds, again, on these themes, with the capacity of "the sounding note [that holds] the note before" (in "Postcard"), the past still sounding in the present. "Pheasant" seeks to further expose and unsettle the norms of the Western gaze, alongside the processes explored through

[74] 2000, p. 157.

[75] 2000, p. 163.

[76] 2000, p. 166.

Pocomania, to question the single authoritative narrative by shifting, correcting and undermining its own voice, creating a plurality of potential versions in both the "Postcard" sequence and "*from* To Glide on Bowed Wings". The echo as a form of resistance recurs throughout the collection; resisting the symbolic order, resisting the repetition of the past as it necessarily alters the present, resisting the authority of a single, dominant (Western) narrative. In performing these resistances, there is the implicit resistance to the imperialism of the lyric, as described by Parmar. The collection is a gesture towards decolonising the self by creating a fissure where the holophrase might be valued and the ethical relationship Spivak describes[77] might undermine the imperial narcissism that continues to inform the Western gaze.

[77] Landry and MacLean discuss Spivak's "Echo" (1993): "Figuring identities and relations differently–not as narcissistic fixtures expecting mirror-reflections across the globe, but as a call to honor and embrace across impossible differences and distances–is indispensable for any movement toward decolonization" (1996, p. 5).

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Chapter One: Bilocation in H.D. and Sandeep Parmar

In her 1955 memoir *Compassionate Friendship*, H.D. identifies "Helen", in the long poem she was writing at the time, as her own eidolon: "This is myself, Helen out of the body, in another world, the eidolon of the legend […] There I, there Helen lives out her war". Of this living out the war in *Helen in Egypt*, with "Achilles" on one side of the "long-playing disc", and "Paris" on the other, she says, "there is the conflict resolved"[78]. But what is the nature of the conflict and by what strategies is it resolved? I will develop bilocation as the core thesis, building on the work of the second wave feminist Rachel Blau DuPlessis, and Susan Edmunds, who takes on DuPlessis in her own analysis. In considering the main conflicts and solutions they develop, I will offer bilocation as a framework to approach the text from an intersectional feminist/postcolonial perspective, critically analysing the fragmentation and divisions implied by the Egyptian/Greek, East/West world of the poem. Central to this is the concept of counterpoint. This is a mode of reading developed by Edward Said, which searches literary texts for latencies of colonialism and empire embedded within the dominant discourse, in order to expose unacknowledged bias and provoke new potential for shaping the future. In making a contrapuntal reading of H.D. I hope to bring such latencies to the surface. And to take this a step further, I will go on to examine how Sandeep Parmar's 2015 response to H.D.'s Helen, *Eidolon*, works with its literary inheritance, acknowledging and undermining historic bias, but also entrenched coloniality, which is marked by its continuance in contemporary societies. The chapter is organised under three subheadings: Ways of Reading *Helen in Egypt*; Postcolonialism and Counterpoint; H.D. and Heritage in Sandeep Parmar.

Ways of Reading *Helen in Egypt*

Fantasy, the mother and hysterical identification are crucial to Edmunds's reading of *Helen in*

[78] 2012, p. 92.

Egypt. Edmunds[79] takes DuPlessis's "Romantic Thralldom"[80] as her starting point[81], but Edmunds identifies a quite different set of dynamics to romantic thralldom/the sufficient family. She pursues a psychoanalytic reading to identify "Helen" as the bridge between "Jocasta" and "Isis", Greece and Egypt, moving from the warring Oedipal family to the peaceful pre-Oedipal via hysteria[82]. The hysteric, Edmunds quotes from Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, uses fantasy to "act all the parts in a play single-handed"[83], and this is what she demonstrates Helen to be doing through shared bodily symptoms or markings. It is this symptom-turned-superpower of hysterical identification that gives Helen psychic access to Isis when Helen blackens her face, "*like the prophetic* femme noire *of*

[79] 1991.

[80] 1979.

[81] Both critics present autobiographical details. Lord Dowding was RAF commanding officer during the Battle of Britain and the inspiration for "Achilles" in *Helen in Egypt*. H.D. initially saw him as her spiritual equal, but he became dismissive of her psychic encounters, exposing him as yet another "héros fatal", in H.D.'s words (Doolittle, 2012, p. 99). Erich Heydt, too, who inspires "Paris", "had scant sympathy" for her psychic stories (2012, p. 125). DuPlessis states: "although the poem was provoked by rejection, within it the pattern of thralldom is broken: the same needs are met by different relationships, and nurturance and vision are achieved without sexual or spiritual damage from men" (1979, p. 191).

[82] While Freud, perhaps, hoped to resolve his pre-Oedipal diagnosis of H.D., in Edmund's reading, H.D.'s text does not share this hope. In conflating disorder with cure, rather, hysteria is identity-forming and powerful. For Freud, the solution is the father, the third term, the law, but Edmunds sees the father transformed and reconciled within the mother. This is what makes the hysterical mother-fixation curative, and it is this imaginative leap that psychoanalysis is unable to conceive of.

[83] 1991, p. 478.

antiquity"[84]. Through this hysterical blackening, Helen is able to absorb Isis' resurrective powers, which Edmunds's examination of the lily argues; Isis' flower accumulates meaning, and so the Greek family are redeemed, rather than replaced, by the Egyptian[85].

Much of Edmunds's argument rests on Helen's bodily marking, but although she begins her own contrapuntal reading, by examining the relationship of Paris and Clytaemnestra to Egypt, as contemporary threats to the British Crown[86], I want to focus on the implications of how Helen-Isis is configured. In the same moment Helen blackens her skin, Achilles attacks her on the beach, and this raises questions about the text's relationship with, or attitude to, colonialism:

> What sort of enchantment is this?
> what art will you wield with a fagot?
> are you Hecate? are you witch?[87]

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[84] Doolittle, 1974*,* p. 15.

[85] Edmunds illustrates this via H.D.'s phrase: "flower of all-time" (Doolittle, 1974, p. 27). In Euripides' *Helen*, "Menelaus" says "flower of Hellas", to incite his army to kill (Edmunds, 1991, p. 482). He uses the term "flower" to mean "best", to suggest the Greek fleets are superior. H.D.'s similar phrase also means "best", but here it is in elegy for Achilles' soldiers. Edmunds's point is that, through this turn, the womb-flower of Isis loses its power of rebirth, only for this to be recovered in Helen's vision of the lily with sails for petals. This transforms the Greek fleet that has been "torn asunder", like Osiris, into the son, Horus (Doolittle, 1974, p. 27).

[86] Paris, though, has been transformed. Edmunds says:" Her solution will be an act of 'subtle genealogy' whereby the oedipal Paris is reconstituted as a Horus, who comes […] to restore the life of his new father, Achilles" (1991, p. 486). She appears to be going against her own evidence, then, when she uses his history, pre-transformation, to support her argument that Helen's turn against him evidences a return to old power structures.

[87] Doolittle, 1974, p. 16.

Blackface is its own deeply entrenched problem, in terms of contemporary attitudes to the racial other, which we will come to. Firstly, however, there are questions about the figure and accusation of witchcraft. Witches we might consider as marginalised and maligned, and we can relate this to Anne Storch's findings, where unintelligibility, for those without access to the dominant discourse, becomes an act of agency. Storch is looking at the semiotics of noise, which "always [holds] the possibility of actually being a curse, as part of witchcraft or the sound of a spirit speaking through a woman" [88]. It is, for example, the sound of the dead that Helen entreats, and which saves her from Achilles: "did he hear the whirr of wings, // did he feel the invisible host / surrounding and helping me?"[89]. This whirring, and the obscuring convolutions of her speech – as the passage gallops and weaves through the chick, the bee, the thousand-petalled lily, all to the song of "the harpers"[90] – is a kind of language clutter. Such noise interrupts conventional expectations of time and story and flow, and so, though not the "gibberish" Storch encounters[91], there is that sense of Helen as enchantress trying to "*charm*" Achilles and "*invoke*" the host[92], a sense of "language as art", as Storch puts it:

> Noise is a semiotically complex phenomenon. It encodes Otherness and the transgression of societal norms, unintelligibility, voice, but also the acknowledgement of a reality beyond the world that can normally be perceived and controlled by people[93].

To understand the witch as a symbol both of self-exclusion, and strategy towards agency for the

[88] 2017, p. 54.

[89] Doolittle, 1974, p. 40.

[90] Doolittle, 1974, p. 45.

[91] 2017, p. 54.

[92] Doolittle, 1974, p. 37.

[93] 2017, p. 56.

racial other, creates a potential space for Helen-Isis as witch to express her "*racial inheritance*"[94], beyond what is ordinarily audible, intelligible. This might be considered a latency in the text, an underlying acknowledgement of the racial other that is not, however, fully realised. In calling Helen, that is, Helen-Isis," witch", Achilles is, in fact, accusing her of seduction because, as Edmunds takes into account, seduction was, historically, an allegation against witches. This, she says, links the moment of Achilles' attack with the accusation of seduction made against Crete-Egypt in "Leuké". The dilemma, then, is that Crete-Egypt/Isis as key to the peaceful reconstruction of society, becomes, simultaneously, seductress, and as such, a threat to Greece, the West, to Britain and empire. Edmunds makes some moves, here, to identify H.D.'s attitude towards modern Egypt[95], but if we go a step further, there is the implication that this ambivalence surrounding the figure of the witch positions decolonisation at the heart of social transformation, albeit at odds with the poem's final turn from Egypt. Here, then, is the conflict, not resolved, as H.D. says, but in motion.

DuPlessis's and Edmunds's readings centre on reconciliation, but perhaps the conflict invoked by the moment of Helen's identification with Isis suggests the unresolved process of perpetual bilocation is its own end. That the fetishisation of the female body across time/space, both divided and connected, creates a framework that identifies and articulates hidden, or repressed, paradoxes. Bilocation is there from the beginning. Helen in Egypt, we are reminded, is innocent, that is, she

[94] Doolittle, 1974, p. 13.

[95] In Edmunds's 1994 version of this essay, she gives a more detailed account of how historical events in revolutionary Egypt map against the writing of *Helen in Egypt.* She concludes: "while it is possible to establish Bryher's anxiety over the emerging collapse of the British Empire […] my attempts to ascertain H.D.'s response to these events remain speculative, spun like her own narrative from stray hairs of evidence" (p. 148).

never was in Troy: "*The Greeks and the Trojans alike fought for an illusion*"[96]. And yet by page 3, we hear she is "*both phantom and reality*". Friedman argues that Helen is ambivalent towards Achilles because his attack on her "forces Helen to question the 'phantom theory 'of Helen of Troy [which destroys] the peace of easy innocence"[97]. Helen in Troy is not a separate figure to Helen in Egypt; they overlap and identify, with memories of Troy returning explicitly for Helen in Part III, "Eidolon". DuPlessis and Edmunds make use of these binaries, and Edmunds pushes the theoretical possibilities of bilocation through hysterical identification, with Helen psychically linked not only to her own double but to Isis and others. Their focus is on outcome, that is, on what an alternative mythology and transformed Helen could achieve[98]. But what is it to be, to remain, divided, or dual? What I would like to do now is revisit some of the themes raised by DuPlessis and Edmunds – feminism, patriarchy and colonialism – using bilocation, and the deep structures I will identify in the text as underpinning that phenomenon, as a framework.

Thinking about the variance between, and potential of, bifurcation and bilocation, that is, of how much Helen becomes two or more, or is one figure in two places at once, is suggestive of H.D.'s

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[96] Doolittle, 1974, p. 1.

[97] 1987, p. 62.

[98] Edmunds uses Freud's work on daydreams to underpin Helen's hysterical powers, linking his theory with a passage in *Helen in Egypt*: "the million personal things, / things remembered, forgotten, […] and re-assembeld in different order" (Doolittle, 1974, p. 289). DuPlessis uses the same lines to evidence her anti-epic argument (1979, p. 192), which creates the conditions for Helen-Thetis to emerge from the cocoon on Leuké, which is, for DuPlessis, "an accurate postulation of all the relationships that would have to be transformed in order for a new kind of male-female sexual and spiritual relation to exist" (p. 203). Two differing feminist pathways towards resolution evidenced by the same passage.

over-mind; this H.D. describes as a psychic energy shared across minds and bodies "in sympathy"[99], where the structure of the conscious, subconscious and over(conscious) mind depends on their synthesis or fluidity, an ability to shift between levels that breaks down the binaries H.D. sets up in her work. We might think of this three-part structure in relation to thirdness and the Kristevan *chora*, which Margaroni identifies as a rhythmic, mediating space that prevents the mother-child dyad from collapsing one into the other, without and before the intervention of the father and symbolic language[100]. The bilocating figure of Helen might be understood as maintaining her own self through this transverbal figure, and so it is this that sustains the struggle as an ongoing duality. To reconcile, in this instance, is to lose oneself. But the *chora* is also "a generative space", in Margaroni's words, "where a new modality of the signifying process is produced"[101], and it is this language before language, the semiotic, that I want to consider as a potential structure underpinning bilocation.

Looking for this semiotic, or pre-Oedipal, language in *Helen in Egypt* and how it functions, we can explore how a framework developed from this perspective might affect or progress our reading of the text in relation to its central themes. Whether intentional or not, H.D. makes use of language that can be aligned with the pre-Oedipal: the rhythms, intonation, repetitions that separate sounds from semantic meaning. They *mean* instinctively, and can be read as both transformative within specific tropes and as a structure that bridges the two worlds of phantom and reality. To demonstrate the former, consider the way names are taken out of the symbolic order they belong to. We recognise them as part of an arbitrary sign system that denotes a person in language, and when Achilles speaks Helen's name, perhaps that is all he is doing. It seems worth noting that, in this

[99] 1982, p. 47.

[100] 2005, p. 92.

[101] 2005, p. 79.

instance, he names her "Helena", which was the ancient name of the Greek island, Makronisos, and so, perhaps, he is also naming this place, in response to Helen's earlier question, "'what island shall we seek,' / to keep him from staring out / between the painted stele"[102]. Signification is tricky, then. But there is, additionally, the possibility that names do not just denote/connote but invoke. Helen "[summons] the names of home"[103] as charms; they are sounds of enchantment, as much as identity, and are, therefore, separated from their semantic meaning. Another way names are transformative might be thought of when Helen appears to name Thetis into presence, to dissuade Achilles from strangling her. Here, she moves that name out of the symbolic order through presence, because the symbolic is founded on absence.

Thetis is signified by the night-bird hieroglyph, and if we consider these images that mean without words as semiotic in themselves, we can read them across the two planes of Troy and Egypt. For example, the semiotics of stars that border both Egyptian and Trojan planes, and navigate Achilles' journey between them. And then there's Helen's steps that take on rhythmic, measured meaning, again in both planes: for Achilles on the ramparts in Troy, where her pace and turn signifies to him; and for Helen, who actively does not challenge "the ancient Mystery" about why she and Achilles meet, but says, instead: "I will walk // with measured step […] I will count the tread of my feet"[104]. She herself comes to be (be, rather than represent) an example of the semiotics that lie underneath semantic language and underneath bilocation, as the stars, the steps, inhabit both worlds. Though not a question of intentionality, the text does seem to make this idea explicit. At the end of Book 4 of "Pallinode" (Part I), for example: "how are Helen in Egypt / and Helen upon the ramparts, / together yet separate?"; we are answered, at the beginning of Book 5, with "*the harpers*", who "*will*

[102] Doolittle, 1974, p. 35.

[103] Doolittle, 1974, p. 36.

[104] Doolittle, 1974, p. 64.

sing forever of how Achilles met Helen among the shades"[105]. Singing belongs, with its intonation, rhymes and rhythms, to the pre-Oedipal order of language, and so suggests it is semiotics that holds Helen in Troy and Egypt together yet separate; that it is semiotics that underpins bilocation.

Bilocation, then, must be quite different to bifurcation because to link the two Helens, the two planes, in language, is to subvert the implicit divide we might read into two figures offering two potential alternative socio-political systems, such as romantic thralldom and its resolution. We cannot separate the sounds of patriarchal war from the maternal language of semiotics that invokes them: of the clinks and "fury of steel upon steel", "the rasp of a severed wheel"[106]. Perhaps the conflict is not between worlds or systems of worlds, but within. For example, Helen understands the script in Amen's temple as "*intuitive or emotional knowledge, rather than intellectual"*[107]. And this semiotic accord seems to be reiterated when it is the heart and not the head that understands without question:

> the heart does not wonder?
> the heart does not ask?
> the heart accepts,
>
> encompasses the whole
> of the undecipherable script;[108]

But these are themselves questions, and so the heart is in opposition to the "I" that does ask "numberless questions"[109]. How to make sense of this conflict between the ego and the heart, a

[105] Doolittle, 1974, pp. 63, 64.

[106] Doolittle, 1974, p. 42.

[107] Doolittle, 1974, p. 13.

[108] Doolittle, 1974, p. 86.

[109] Doolittle, 1974, p. 85.

conflict that takes place not across two worlds or two figures but within Helen as she exists in Egypt? Margaret Homans considers how, for the daughter, desire is not repressed but suppressed[110], and if we consider this in relation to pre-symbolic language and Kristevan semiotics, it might be possible to develop a deeper understanding of Helen's conflict. For Kristeva, Homans points out, the child is always male[111], which she relates back to the male modernists in Kristeva's research, though it is possible (preferable?) to consider this maleness as a quality of language rather than sex. Homans's point is to delineate between daughter and son, that the son's return to pre-symbolic language is a return to something that has been repressed, "to the 'forbidden' maternal body", because his development of symbolic language "was a response to the prohibition of incest"[112]. Consequently, Homans suggests there is danger, disruption, violation in such texts, whereas for daughters, there is no equivalent risk – not repression but suppression: "If the mother-daughter language I am discussing is continuous from childhood and is, therefore, unlike Kristeva's semiotic, neither repressed nor capable of dangerous return, it is, instead, socially and culturally suppressed and silenced". This mother-daughter language depends on such suppression, Homans goes on to say: that it would not happen "were it not for their culture's privileging of the phallic, and their obligation, as women, to accommodate that privilege"[113]. If H.D. and *Helen in Egypt* use pre-Oedipal/pre-symbolic language, and I argue that they do, how does this nuance between repression and suppression, Kristevan semiotic and non-Kristevan pre-symbolic language, affect our reading?[114] For evidence of suppression, we can look for ways Helen, Isis and Thetis are silenced

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[110] 1986.

[111] DuPlessis, too, considers this in her essay "Language Acquisition" (1986a).

[112] Homans, 1986, pp. 18-19.

[113] 1986, p. 19.

[114] It is difficult not to blur the boundaries between literal gender and language tropes, when the daughter that could be male or female as a child grows up to be a woman accommodating phallic

and/or devalued. We could argue that H.D.'s poem exists because Helen was silenced in the Homeric poem, and we might have a point, but that does not take us further into the conflict identified within Helen, here, in Egypt. Within this poem, she speaks, but (how) is her language, her conflict, related to, or accommodating of, phallic privilege?

Although we have seen Helen seeming to suppress herself, by not challenging the ancient Mystery but instead measuring her steps, we have also observed this as an echo of the silencing, the suppression, she endures as a distant figure on the Trojan ramparts. As such, we recognise a wider culturally oppressive pattern that creates the conditions whereby a woman might conspire in her own suppression. In becoming the rhythm of her steps, she works around or against this suppression, to signify meaning to Achilles. That this pre-Oedipal, pre-symbolic language erupts and exists between these two figures links them not as lovers, but as mother-child, and when, in "Pallinode", Helen invokes Thetis, and says, "*let me love him, as Thetis, his mother*"[115], she transforms them into what might be considered a literalised expression of this linguistic trope. This reproduction of mothering – a move that in Homans's terms[116] is not about restoring the phallus "(what phallus?)", but bypasses it altogether – is, then, the reproduction of the pre-symbolic in the mother-child dyad. In recovering this language, Helen is recovering her daughter, Hermione, as well as her own maternal body. Perhaps this is a testing towards resolution, not, or not only, of Helen's internal conflict, but of the societal conflict between writing and motherhood. Homans offers this as a potential feminist revision of Lacanian linguistics: "To define writing as motherhood

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privilege. And if this distinction does not quite hold, is there not a similar risk of incestuous desire in a mother-daughter dyad as there is seen to be for mother-son? (For a more in-depth consideration of this linguistic incest, see Kloepfer, 1989).

[115] Doolittle, 1974, p. 14.

[116] 1986, p. 24.

holds out the possibility of justifying the woman writer's temerity by neutralizing the conflict between writing and motherhood"[117], though limited by its relation to a patriarchal culture that defines women as mothers. Nevertheless, this example of literalisation provides a sense of how Homans's framework of suppression might operate within the poem.

Although Edmunds uses "repressed" and "suppressed" interchangeably, she is certainly working from a model of repression because the bodily hysteria of psychological trauma her reading relies on is defined by repressed memories; recovery depends on these memories being revealed and verbalised. Edmunds lists four points of the text marked by "repressed memories which abruptly return [and together] emerge as the components of a hidden logic of recovery". The first memory Edmunds describes is when the night-bird flies past Helen and she reads this as a hieroglyph for Thetis ʾname, just before Achilles attacks her, and the fourth is this initial hieroglyph of Thetis that now becomes the figurehead of Achilles ʾwarship. This chain of memories "eventually links the initial moment of a son's inscrutable anger at the sound of his mother's name to the final moment of revelation that he loves her"[118]. It is in appropriating Achilles' wounded heel, as she limps towards Theseus, that Helen is able to access Achilles' repressed memories of Thetis, Edmunds says. The recovery, then, is Achilles' from his own hysteria/war neurosis. Why Achilles' hysteria is maladaptive and Helen's curative is not clear, but in returning to Homans's paradigm of suppression/repression, we might consider those sounds of war (a semiotics expressing fury, violence) as containing, embodying, the violation Homans describes in relation to the repression of Kristevan semiotics. But then, what about the trumpet call, at first aligned with "*man, alone*" – "his fortress […] and his throne"[119], in opposition to music and laughter – a call to war that becomes, it

[117] 1986, p. 27.

[118] Edmunds, 1991, p. 476.

[119] Doolittle, 1974, p. 30.

seems, a signal of its end?

> I will call my sister Nepenthe,
> forgetfulness of the past,
> remembrance of childhood together;
>
> what did she care for the trumpet,
> the herald's cry at the gate,
> *war is over;*[120]

Perhaps, the trumpet cry transforms from war to love in the same trajectory as Achilles' emotions on the beach, and so symbolic and pre-symbolic language cannot be easily mapped against the polarities of the poem to isolate the violence of semiotics. But what is persuasive is that, from Edmunds's depiction of hysteria, we recognise these symptoms as literalisations, themselves, that "bypass verbal figures entirely"[121]. Though this is not Edmunds's point, these symptoms are revealed to be one form (among others) of pre-symbolic language with repression necessarily at its core.

There is evidence, then, of both suppression and repression within the poem's use of pre-symbolic language; that is, the child in the mother-child dyad is marked by both societal suppression and internal repression/return. So, where Homans points to the male child in Kristeva, and the mother-daughter in her own work, we identify the child as both male and female[122]. This is in parallel with

[120] Doolittle, 1974, p. 72.

[121] Edmunds, 1991, p. 481.

[122] Though arriving via different routes, there is some echo with Kloepfer's analysis, here. She concludes: "What H.D. seems to be providing here in this complicated and sometimes contradictory text is a way of access to the mother which allows a space for the daughter as well as the son and for an increase in language jarred free from the symbolic" (1989, p. 169).

Theseus as a mother-father figure[123], and literalised through Euphorion, whose birth returns Achilles and Helen to childhood. Such androgyny, Friedman argues, reflects H.D.'s wider project, "to transcend the dualisms she found reflected throughout the universe"[124] and within her own experience ("two's and two's and two's in my life […] there is a duality"[125]). Friedman illustrates a number of ways the poem does not merely present poles but engages the dynamics of duality[126]:

> A dialectic [that] clarifies the interlocking processes of Love and Death for Helen. Her discovery becomes a refrain repeated many times throughout her quest:
>
> … a bowman from the Walls
>
> let fly the dart;
> some said it was Apollo,
> but I, Helena, knew it was Love's arrow;
>
> it was Love, it was Apollo, it was Paris[127]

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[123] Referring to Helen as "Psyche", Theseus invites her to reenter the cocoon. Again, Theseus is not the dynamic hero we know from mythology, but is based on Freud. The cocoon he offers is a neutral expanse, where Helen can remember or forget as she wishes. DuPlessis examines how Theseus can be read as a mother-father figure, via his "cocoon of nurturance and his inseminating insights" (1979, p. 198). Friedman also takes this view of the Freud/Theseus figure, describing Freud as being, in H.D.'s view, "a person like herself who combined in relatively equal amounts the qualities traditionally designated masculine and feminine" (1987, p. 154). It is apparent that Freud, for H.D., did play a part akin to this mother-father figure, as he is recorded in *Advent* as accepting, if disliking, the mother-role in transference: "it always surprises and shocks me a little. I feel so very masculine" (Doolittle, 1985, p. 147).

[124] Friedman, 1987, p. 285.

[125] Doolittle, 1985, pp. 31-32.

[126] Friedman, 1987, p. 289.

[127] Quoting from Doolittle, 1974, pp. 112-113.

Helen cannot go with Paris from Leuké because the Helen he invokes "is only one phase of her whole identity"[128]. Wholeness is the key, for Friedman, with these dialectics aligned, reconciled, held in imagery, such as of the zodiac circle in "Eidolon", and in the male-female child Euphorion. That there is reason to understand the pre-symbolic language of the poem as, similarly, androgynous, in terms of Homans's framework of suppression/repression, suggests an elegance of form and content; this language register complements, supports, or underpins Friedman's dialectics of wholeness, developing our appreciation of how they function within, or contribute to, H.D.'s writing.

Euphorion represents his/her own mother and father, but also their individual complexities, suggestive of the tension such dialectical wholeness implies, when we consider that Helen is both the child and its mother. Again, she is in two places at once. Actually, the tension is less than it might seem, given that both child and mother belong to the pre-symbolic order of language. Returning to Homans, we might think of the tension as being more acute between Helen as mother, or mother-child, and her reading the Amen script, a role that has her translating this pictographic language into the symbolic. This is a reflection of the dilemma H.D. is conscious of in the duality she sees around and within her ("two's and two's"). She is a woman, a mother, both aspects of silence, or absence. In harnessing the pre-symbolic register, she is re-valuing the position of women, appropriating motherhood from the patriarchal discourse that both defines women as mothers and marginalises them as such, but to do this in writing is inherently problematic, as literature will always take place within a symbolic framework. Homans outlines this clear ambivalence, and if we apply her exploration of women as "bearing the word"[129] within literature to

[128] Friedman, 1987, p 292.

[129] Homans, 1986, p. 31.

H.D.'s poem, we recognise Helen's duality as both the riddle ("She herself is the writing"[130]) and decipherer. Homans suggests this role in literature rarely offers much reward to the woman, and in translating Thetis' name from the night-bird, an act that Edmunds has demonstrated to be central to Achilles' recovery, and by extension to the reconstruction of social harmony, perhaps there remains the question of what is in it for Helen, personally.

In DuPlessis's analysis, we might argue that Helen acquires the same outcome as all women, which is to escape the inequity of romantic thralldom, though in Edmunds's analysis the resolution remains committed to the nuclear family. Edmunds's own argument leaves unclear what recovery would look like for Helen, given her hysteria is both disorder and curative. To recover from hysteria, must she give up her curative powers? Perhaps Helen regains her innocence, as she is no longer the faithless wife of Troy. But then, what is innocence worth, if it means only to escape the criticism of a social morality that condemns women's sexuality and not men's (was it not the men, in this myth, that started the war?[131])? Further, we have seen that Crete-Egypt is accused of being a seductress, and with Helen attacked as a literalised Isis, it would be inconsistent to think she escapes even this. What if seduction is not the offence we assume it to be, or it is one levelled by Achilles, Greece, patriarchy, rather than H.D.? H.D. engaged heavily with Euripides, whose own narrative of Helen builds on Stesichorus' apology[132]. While Stesichorus and Euripides create their eidolons in order to free Helen from the guilt of adultery, with Menelaus able to reclaim his faithful

[130] Doolittle, 1974, p. 22.

[131] Sandeep Parmar (2015, p. 68): "If the Trojan war was not about 'the face that launched a thousand ships', then it was about secure and much sought-after access to trade routes into Asia from the Mediterranean, regional dominance, strategic placement in the path of invading armies from the Middle East, etc, etc, etc".

[132] Stesichorus b. 632/629 BCE.

wife at the end of Euripides' play, H.D. does not reunite husband and wife. As Friedman says[133], "H.D. bases her defense of Helen on a redefinition of innocence that calls into question the male-dominated system of values victimizing Helen in the first place"[134]. Perhaps, then, H.D.'s achievement through the bilocation in *Helen in Egypt* is not to resolve feminist issues but to make visible patriarchal constraints that have been embedded linguistically, assumed as universals, through a text that illuminates and embodies both a potential strategy for making women intelligible and the impediments to that potential.

Helen as a feminist revision is demonstrably ambivalent through the bilocation we have been exploring. If we use this framework of bilocation to map Helen's duality focusing on intersectional issues, it might be possible to understand how the text operates from a postcolonial perspective. The most obvious bilocation is that Helen of Sparta becomes both Helen in Troy and Helen in Egypt. She is mapped against geography, with the West, via Troy, as the masculine site of violence and war, the East in opposition, focusing on reconciliation and domesticity. Achilles is no longer the immortal warrior he was at Troy, and while he mourns for his lost children, the defeated ships and soldiers that make up the machinery of empire, Helen works to reimagine them as the thousand-petalled lily so central to both DuPlessis's and Edmunds's social reconstructions[135]. And yet, H.D.

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[133] In Friedman & DuPlessis, 1990, p. 377.

[134] Parmar also identifies the apportioning of blame and innocence in Antiquity as part of the impulse to revisit the myth: "Can we model, as we have, a civilization on one that exploits, ensnares and silences women, the more 'advanced' it becomes? Where women are traded as prizes and their narratives of 'goddess, princess, whore' are determined not by any will or intent but by the wholesale utility of their being apportioned with blame?" (2015, p. 68).

[135] Though both critics look to H.D.'s autobiographical writing, neither of them mention other instances of the lily, and how this might inform their analysis of the lily in *Helen in Egypt*. For

sets this retreat from empire inside a country that was at the time, itself, a British colony. Edmunds, we know, begins to explore the postcolonial implications of this in her paper:

> Helen's fantasy of slaying the seductive "Crete-Egypt" both rationalizes and disguises her sudden desire to conquer a suspiciously modern Egyptian enemy by mapping an earlier, more brutal script of the hysteric's fate onto an earlier, more inviting Egypt[136].

In privileging the father's pre-eminence over what has seemed the drive of the poem (peace, equality, etc), H.D. appears conflicted between her "desire to reform the patriarchal family and her resilient nostalgia for it"[137]. With this conflict in mind, I would like to consider the ways we might read *Helen in Egypt* focusing on its postcolonial implications.

Postcolonialism and Counterpoint

One reason bilocation and pre-symbolic language are appealing to this analysis is that, as Storch's semiotics of noise suggests, there is a connection between this register of language, the subaltern

example, in *Advent* (1985), H.D. dreams of a grandfather's garden with only one flower, an Easter Lily, which she takes home to her mother and grandmother, and later roots in her own grandfather's grave. H.D. reads this as signifying her creative inheritance, passed down through her Celtic grandmother and artist mother. Heritage could be read into the familial reconstructions of Edmunds and DuPlessis (they both look to the mother for answers), but especially Edmunds, in that accumulation of meaning inherited from the Egyptian civilisation by the Greek, that it took Egypt to make the Greek image of "mother love […] visible and legible" (1991, p. 491). Inheritance and the mother seem to chime with that notion of reconciliation, and are inscribed into Edmunds's resolution.

[136] 1991, p. 493.

[137] Edmunds, 1991, p. 494.

and creative processes[138]. Pre-symbolic language, or semiotics, whether marked by repression or suppression, is the language of the other, and in exposing this linguistic otherness in relation to the bilocation in *Helen in Egypt*, we facilitate a contrapuntal reading, a framework developed by Said:

> We must therefore read the great canonical texts, and perhaps also the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture, with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what was silent or marginally present or ideologically represented […] in such works […] to include what was once forcibly excluded[139].

Said is trying to expose evidence of colonial resistance previously suppressed in Western narratives[140]. When Edmunds discusses Helen as seductress, aligned with Crete-Egypt, her interest is whether this lets slip H.D.'s attitude towards modern Egypt. What a more focused contrapuntal reading might develop and evidence is the ways *Helen in Egypt* is discontinuous with itself because of an unconscious and conflicted engagement with its contemporary political environment. Let's begin by thinking more about the ways Paris and Egypt might be demonstrably connected within the text, as, despite Edmunds's assertion, it seems counterintuitive. When Helen turns away from Paris, before the end of the poem, Edmunds suggests that this is evidence of H.D.'s bias. Paris is the penultimate character to appear in the poem, with a question circling around him in the last lines:

> *But what could Paris know of the sea,*
> *its beat and long reverberation,*
> *its booming and delicate echo,*
>
> *its ripple that spells a charm*
> *on the sand, the rock-lichen,*
> *the sea-moss, the sand,*
>
> *and again and again, the sand;*[141]

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[138] 2017.

[139] 1994, pp. 78-79.

[140] Especially, for him, the British novel, such as Kipling, or the history of colonialism and destruction in Algeria and its later independence in Camus.

[141] Doolittle, 1974, p.304.

To read this as anger, as Edmunds does, seems to articulate Helen's banishment of him. But there is a tension here. The question is specifically about the rhythm and spell of the sea, and is presented in song, both pointing to and invoking the pre-symbolic register. Paris stands accused, not of knowing nothing about the sea, but of knowing nothing about its semiotics. This positions him as within the symbolic register, as the law, but how can Paris be aligned with Egypt as a threat to the British crown, if, linguistically, he represents the law/crown? What if we take the song, the question, literally: not as rebuke but as a genuine enquiry? If we want to find evidence of an alignment with Egypt, we must establish whether it is possible to align him with pre-Oedipal language, the language of the other, the colonised. Can we understand his imperative to Helen, to "call on Thetis"[142], as indicative of his knowing the sea's "*beats and long reverberation*", that in referencing Thetis' dressing of Achilles in "'*woman's robe*'" on Scyros[143] he is not only belittling Achilles but demonstrating a (potentially psychic) connection to Thetis, and so, to the sea? We can support this linguistic alignment when we consider his position in the text more broadly; he is one of the repressed memories Edmunds identifies (in relation to hysteria), a memory unspoken in Part I. It then follows that in his appearance at the beginning of Part II, he becomes the embodiment of the "dangerous return" in Kristevan semiotics, and is, therefore, linked to the maternal body, that is, in this case, Egypt. And "*only Achilles could break his heart*"[144].

With Paris and Egypt aligned in the end, perhaps excluded by Helen, broken-hearted surely, via Achilles, there are specific questions to be asked about the use or potential appropriation of the Egyptian culture. Going back to when Helen blackens her skin, as a key recurring moment, is this cultural appropriation, primitivism? Blackface will and should remain a problem for any

[142] Doolittle, 1974, p. 214.

[143] Doolittle, 1974, p. 213.

[144] Doolittle, 1974, p. 304.

contemporary reader; not to be solved, but to be considered from within the context of the era it was written. There is the potential to read the poem as attempting to recover a black ancestry, which Bernal has argued was erased in the late 18th and 19th centuries. He says:

> In the new period of systemic racism, the eighteenth-century image of the Greeks changed progressively from that of intermediaries who had transmitted some *part* of the civilisation and wisdom of the 'East' to the 'West' into that of the very creators of civilisation[145].

Said uses Bernal as an example of a scholar who has "accentuated the extraordinary influence of today's anxieties and agendas on the pure (even purged) images we construct of a privileged, genealogically useful past, a past in which we exclude unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives"[146]. Whether or not much of the extensive criticism Bernal's study received (summarised by Muhly's comment: "Bernal does not understand the nature of historical scholarship"[147]) might be cast off as embodying the same ethnocentrism he is targeting, what is more significant to this chapter is that it does suggest his was a marginalised position. The implication is that the image of a Eurocentric Ancient Greece as the founder of Western civilisation was entrenched throughout H.D.'s life. This dominance seems supported by the defensive moves Egyptologists (known to H.D.) made in their reappraisals. These moves centred on taking Egypt out of Africa, arguing either for foreign invaders as the civilising force, as in E.A. Wallis Budge, or in James Breasted[148], who credited an indigenous population, with the caveat that this ancient population was white[149]. And so, even though we might

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[145] 2001, pp. 4-5.

[146] 1994, p. 16.

[147] 1990, pp. 88-89.

[148] Bryant and Eaverly, 2007.

[149] In Bernal's account, it is the increasing tendency to see Egypt as Black African that led to its position as founder of civilisation being overturned in favour of Greece: "At first, the racism of the Enlightenment did not affect the reputation of the Egyptians because they were granted honorary

argue *Helen in Egypt* positions Egypt at the heart of a reconstructed or recovered civilisation[150], we cannot extrapolate from this alone that Isis is recognised, even as she is being performed, as a woman of colour. H.D.'s poem exposes, if not entirely successfully, the assumed universals of patriarchy, but there remains the question of whether her portrayal of Egypt is working to subvert the dominant racial discourse or continuing in that tradition.

This question becomes especially pertinent in respect of Edmunds's concerns regarding the poem's end: "H.D. forcibly excludes the characters most consistently linked with Egypt from the final picture of Greek mother love which it has taken Egypt to make visible and legible"[151]. The overarching concern, it now seems clear, is contrapuntal; that is, the processes of transformation that Edmunds has characterised as Oedipal/Greek into pre-Oedipal suggests a recovering of the

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European status. After the 1720s, however, both radicals and romantics began to view Egypt as increasingly African" (2001, p. 4).

[150] Bryant and Eaverly assert that H.D. provided a break from normalised "Eurocentric racial hierarchies", replacing Classical and/or Biblical origin stories with Egypt at the centre of civilisation, but that a contemporary American audience would have been resistant to this reappraisal. They suggest the various attacks on Helen-Isis were pre-emptive of the criticism she would receive. This criticism would be despite American Egyptologist James Breasted's work to separate "Egypt from Black Africa and the (American) negro, which would surely have facilitated his acceptance among the general public" (2007, p. 444). However, in their account of the debate between Budge and Breasted, it is clear that this is as much about Anglo-US rivalries as it is about Egypt. Their exploration of H.D.'s attitude towards Egyptian archeology as the new American frontier, in keeping with Breasted, and akin to the Wild West, appears to accept such positioning of America as the new civilisation, replacing Eurocentrism with Americentrism.

[151] 1991, p. 491.

Egyptian mother, and her role in the genealogy of Greek culture, but that in excluding Egypt from the poem's end, any recovery is partial, subverted, exploited as cultural appropriation. This connects with David Irving[152], who also builds on Said's theoretical counterpoint, when he describes the ways that "many indigenous musics were contrapuntalized—that is, certain Western melodic and harmonic structures were absorbed into them—so they could be accepted within colonial frameworks"[153]. This kind of musical manipulation, which Irving describes as a form of colonial control, imposing the music of the dominant/ruling class, may also make non-European scales and time signatures audible as music to the European ear, though not by accepting them on their own terms but through appropriation. Mapped against *Helen in Egypt*, it becomes clear that something similar is happening; the Greek family is not erased by the recovery of the Egyptian family but vice versa, as the former absorbs the latter, and benefits from them. We can see this most clearly in Helen-Isis, as Helen is not transformed into Isis but absorbs her powers of resurrection. From a feminist point of view, women and issues primarily affecting women are elevated, albeit steeped in ambivalence. What seems less ambivalent is that, in this example, from an intersectional point of view, any benefit, elevation or feminist revision is achieved at the expense of the woman of colour.

We know that the poem is playing to subvert the binaries and dualisms H.D. saw all around her, but perhaps this intersectional question demonstrates the limitations of that play. To think about this, we can consider how *Helen in Egypt* has been discussed as a work of deconstruction, especially regarding the form, which is and is not epic. DuPlessis presents *Helen in Egypt* as anti-epic[154],

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[152] 2010, p. 3.

[153] His discussion is in relation to the music of Manila.

[154] One key aspect of DuPlessis's argument is H.D.'s development of Achilles and Helen, who, for H.D., are not the hero and beauty of the old myth, but are "the vulnerable 'New Mortal', and an

whereas Friedman characterises the poem as a feminised epic. She says: "The binary contrast between lyric and epic overlaps with the dualistic patterns of patriarchal ideology"[155], and so any pressure on epic norms has the potential to impact patriarchal norms. But neither of these descriptions of the poem moves us beyond the binary structure. Harriet Tarlo, however, does suggest how *Helen in Egypt* breaks down formal/generic binaries to become a "fusion of personal and universal journeys", creating a new form where the narrative of the epic and semiotics of the lyric might be understood as inside one another: "Ultimately, […] the rhythm, the repetition and the assonance carries her poem too, displacing the epic idea that the story should, alone, carry the poem"[156]. We know that the semiotic can only be experienced within the symbolic, but perhaps what pushes this beyond an eruption towards deconstruction is a sort of thirdness via the third genre considered by Tarlo: drama. Tarlo demonstrates her view of *Helen in Egypt* as transgeneric, noting its refusal of "epic monologism in favour of dramatic polyphonic interaction between characters"[157]. In his introduction to *Helen in Egypt*, Horace Gregory writes of H.D. wearing Stesichorus' mask:

> Her poem is written in a series of three-line choral stanzas; it is a semidramatic lyric narrative; each change of scene, each change of voice is introduced by a brief interlude in prose. Far from distracting the eye and ear of the reader, the design of the poem sustains the flow of its variations, and preserves its narrative unity[158].

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incubating psyche, still in chrysalis but nonetheless fully winged (Helen-Thetis)" (1979, p. 191). In identifying H.D.'s use of these anti-epic characters, in opposition to their Homeric counterparts, DuPlessis is invoking the "anxiety of authorship", a subject she has written on elsewhere (1986), and refers to Gilbert and Gubar (1984), who identify the anti-epic as a viable, subtle, revisionist move for women working to self-create.

[155] 1986, p. 205.

[156] 1994, pp. 242, 261.

[157] 1994, p. 244.

[158] 1974, p. viii.

This formal engagement with Stesichorus/Euripides structures the whole, preventing its collapse into incoherence. And so, it is drama that facilitates the deconstruction of the epic (and lyric) form, disrupting the logocentrism of patriarchal ideology.

Such logocentrism with regards to the subaltern is more difficult to overcome. This might be because it is more difficult to recognise from a position of agency, where "giving voice", as Sarah Bracke, drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, notes, relies on logocentrism, and therefore, always involves the erasure of what it seeks to recover[159]. Similarly to phallic privilege, then, the privileging of white over non-white narratives is embedded. Edmunds notes H.D.'s habitual feminising of the East[160] as a wider pattern that holds in *Helen in Egypt*, quoting from "People of Sparta" [1924], where H.D. invokes a moment of "jeopardy": "shall this our earth be a creature of sensuous, high strung, feminine, changeable, fluid character, given first to the lure of the senses, a creation of the sun but of an Eastern sun, […] or shall the West prevail"[161]. In this essay, H.D. explicitly pre-empts the poem's association of Athens with intellect and demonstrates the privileging intrinsic to binary structures. This echoes the poem's late association of Egypt with foreignness and fear, as Achilles questions the wood used to make Thetis' masthead:

> Did her eyes slant in the old way?
> was she Greek or Egyptian?
> had some Phoenician sailor wrought her?
>
> was she oak-wood or cedar?
> had she been cut from an awkward block[162]

This question of the eyes seems to connect us back to Helen-Isis on the beach, who "could not hide

[159] 2016, p. 848.

[160] 1991, p. 485.

[161] Doolittle, 2019, pp. 48-49.

[162] Doolittle, 1974, p. 245.

[her] eyes"[163], but also forwards to when Achilles repeats this question, now clearly angry with the sea-mother, who promised and failed to give him immortality, who "*cheated at last* […] O careless, unspeakable mother"[164].

Edmunds suggests that the poem's ending with Achilles, and treatment of Egypt/Paris, "marks the poem as a work of the 1950s"[165], but it is arguable that the bias within the binary structure H.D. appears to sustain is not contained within the past. Bracke's argument relates to resilience as a raw material in the 21st Century, and how this pertains to the idea of the new subaltern, "an army of resilient people". She says, "The resilience of the wretched of the earth is arguably fetishized by the economic and political institutions that bear the bulk of responsibility for contemporary conditions of precarity that are (required to be) met with resilience"[166]. The new subaltern is a resource to be maintained and quarried. And so, though the "*eternal moment*"[167] of the Helen-Isis bilocation raises the possibility of racial/colonial inversion, in perpetuating the binary structure H.D. also perpetuates the erasure. This is reflected in "Eidolon" where this moment is reduced to a fragmented memory of "shells, / whiter than bone"[168], and could be thought to pre-empt the surge of post-war neoliberal policies in the US and the UK, as Isis' powers of resurrection, her myth and family, have been put to use in the service of the West. It would be harsh to conclude that this demonstrates a neoliberal attitude in H.D., but it does move us away from Edmunds's interpretation of the womb-flower as simply redemptive, and towards an understanding of colonial appropriation. By failing to liberate

[163] Doolittle, 1974, p. 38.

[164] Doolittle, 1974, p. 253.

[165] 1991, p. 491.

[166] 2016, pp. 851-852.

[167] Doolittle, 1974, p. 269.

[168] Doolittle, 1974, p. 235.

Isis from the logocentric structure, H.D. is merely speaking for her, an impossibility that can only work to return Thetis to her entrenched privileging before the end of the poem. Here the same moment from Part I returns, the focus now turning from Isis to Thetis:

> but there is one secret,
> unpronounceable name,
> a whisper, a breath,
>
> two syllables, yes, like the Isis-name,
> but broken, not quite the same,
> breathed differently,[169]

Isis is made absent by the use of her name specifically as name, moving her into the symbolic register, while Thetis is aligned with the semiotics of the maternal body. Isis has served her purpose to make visible, to recover, the Greek mother, who will now dominate the "*eternal moment*". Consequently, the subaltern's position is also, it seems, eternal.

As suggested above, this is not offered as evidence of neoliberalism within H.D.'s work but in line with Said's concept of counterpoint. As Rose states, "You read a historic writer not for what they failed to see, not for the ideological blindspots of their writing […] but for the as-yet-unlived, still-shaping history which their vision […] foresees and provokes"[170]. The bilocation of Helen-Isis is central to understanding the text in this way, especially the telepathic communication between these women as being intergenerational as well as cross-cultural. Edmunds's focus on the lily[171] is concerned with how H.D. can "reconstruct and redeem, rather than merely replace, the Greek

[169] Doolittle, 1974, p. 279.

[170] Cited in Said, 2004, p. 67.

[171] 1991, p. 484.

legend of the destructive oedipal family"[172], but we can think of her analysis in terms of colonial inheritance or haunting. Stephen Frosh presents psychoanalytic approaches to telepathy as hauntings, outlining vertical and horizontal dimensions[173]. The horizontal dimension, such as in transference, would consider Helen and Isis to be contemporaries separated by space (and/or culture). Here we might think of H.D.'s wider project seen across her body of work, to revise and recover a mythology of female mythical power, where the boy Jesus is absent, in *Trilogy* [1946], for example, leaving "Our Lady" at the symbolic centre[174]. There is a plethora of female goddesses invoked by H.D. that participate in what DuPlessis describes as "mirroring": "a special form of palimpsest in which two [or more] separate selves exchange views and each Otherness is seen with the eyes of empathetic identification"[175]. It seems reasonable to consider Helen-Isis as belonging to this intention, but just as clear is that this is not true mirroring because it is not symmetrical, it is not an exchange. The eyes of Helen that see Isis' Otherness may be empathetic, but they are also "devouring", in Frosh's terms[176].

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[172] DuPlessis, too, suggests the unheroic details contained within that other story are recovered or uncovered, with Egypt positioned as a figurative archeological site (which it was, literally, at the time of H.D.'s visit) that adds to, rather than replaces the epic. But DuPlessis's use of the lily is straightforwardly emblematic of "the sufficient family", and when Helen walks away from what is described as an untransformed Paris, Helen escapes that narrative, which emphasises the conflict between romantic thralldom and the sufficient family as either/or. Therefore, it seems there are (at least) two potential functions of the eidolon device: solution (replacement) and reconciliation (redemption).

[173] 2012.

[174] 1983, p. 567.

[175] 1986, p. 52.

[176] 2012, p. 250.

On the other hand, the vertical dimension, such as in the intergenerational transmission of trauma, helps us to think about Bernal's assertion regarding Helen's Egyptian heritage. Helen and Isis are separated by time, rather than space, here, with Isis, and her embodiment of an Egyptian civilisation, both pre-dating and informing Greek antiquity. Helen-Isis becomes a literalisation of that ancestry, then. In this model, Isis, and the black ancestry of Helen, has been repressed, and so Isis haunts Helen, returning to consciousness in Helen-Isis. This return is marked by the eruptions of semiotic language, the rhythms and fragments and hieroglyphs noted earlier. This eruption is not just representative of Isis' return, though. It is, for Kristeva, a manifestation. She defines the semiotic as the language of the drives, drives that were repressed with the acquisition of symbolic language[177]. It is the recovery of the plurality of voice, or the heterogeneity of drives, that Kristeva pursues, and that will, in her theory, disrupt the dominance of the patriarchal/symbolic discourse. This points us back towards the *Chora* that, as Margaroni puts it, "displace[s] the speaking subject, (re)tracing its emergence [and] returning it to the maternal body"[178]. For Margaroni, this preverbal, archaic origin[179] can only be arrived at from outside the memory of Western metaphysics, that is "the memory of this 'other' beginning can never belong to us, descendants as we are of the Greeks. It can only come back to us as the memory of an (the) other"[180]. These eruptions of the semiotic into the symbolic are, then, not a comforting return to the maternal body, but an intergenerational haunting.

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[177] In her essay "Revolution in poetic language" (1984).

[178] 2005, p, 79.

[179] As Margaroni develops the relationship between Kristeva and Plato, she recognises the palintropic turn, and that this return undercuts any sense of a stable origin: "Plato's *chora* is an abyssal origin within which the very concept of the Beginning loses itself in its own proliferating doubles" (2005, p. 83).

[180] 2005, p. 83.

So, H.D. recovers Isis from what has been forgotten or written out of history, but she cannot claim her directly because she is always other. Perhaps this is the key to recognition, in that we remain separate (thirdness), rather than incorporating, reconciling, absorbing the other into ourselves. At the same time, Frosh suggests (via Derrida) that what is repressed is both true and unwanted[181], so in presenting Isis as a haunting, the poem positions Helen's racial heritage as a distressing truth that resists repression. What this reading of *Helen in Egypt* offers is how a text can provoke questions even as it fails to pursue them, suggesting some response to critics of counterpoint, such as Gana, who asks:

> how can a text that is inextricably bound to its own context […] show, on the one hand, how limited its vision of non-European cultures is and, on the other, how crucial its postulations to the postcolonial era and to the political redress of other cultures and peoples are?[182].

From our era, we can see what H.D., bound by her own context, might have struggled to see, which is how the text privileges the West and uses Isis, appropriating her skills for the benefit of the Western woman, but we also see latencies in the text, the potential to recognise the woman of colour, though that recognition be not fully realised.

If we bring in the vertical dimension to the text more widely, it is possible to understand Achilles' reaction to the Thetis masthead in similar terms, that the association of foreignness and fear at this point in the poem is both a questioning of where the wood originated, and a haunting of Achilles by his own origins, his own repressed foreignness. But we are looking at another return, here, the repressed incestuous desire of the son for the mother, not only in the linguistic terms we have explored, but in Freud's thoughts on the primitive. Perhaps, then, although this appears to be in parallel with the haunting of Helen-Isis, whereas that construct might be discussed as ambivalent in

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[181] 2012, p. 247.

[182] 2004, para 2.

its treatment of the racial other, Achilles' response to Thetis' perceived foreignness appears to underscore the primitivist notion that what is foreign is intrinsically distasteful, associated with the mother's failure, yes, but also aligned with socially abhorrent sexual fantasy.

This leads us to think about the slant of the eyes "in the old way" in relation to Freud's own preoccupation with this question regarding Moses and his work to demonstrate that man's origins as an Egyptian: a preoccupation, which as Edmunds shows, pervades the poem with the "question of Helen's race"[183]. In Said's contrapuntal reading of *Moses and Monotheism*[184], he suggests that, in Freud's description of "primitive behaviour", there is:

> [an] implicit refusal, in the end, to erect an insurmountable barrier between non-European primitives and European civilisation; on the contrary […] what may have been left behind historically catches up with us in such universal behaviours as the prohibition against incest, or […] the return of the repressed[185].

In this approach, we might think of Achilles' reaction to Thetis not, or not only, as disgust of his own foreignness, his own desire, but as a levelling between East and West: that refusal of "an insurmountable barrier" between them. However, when Said says "in the end", he seems to be glossing over something problematic[186]. Perhaps the Eurocentrism underpinning Freud's concept

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[183] 1994, p. 122.

[184] Freud (1939).

[185] 2004, pp. 19-20.

[186] Yosef Yerushalmi's analysis of *Moses and Monotheism* focuses on the Lamarckian provision for intergenerational continuity. It is this inheritance that enables Freud to reject religious and cultural attributes of the Jewish identity while claiming Jewishness for himself (Frosh, 2012, p. 256). Stephen Frosh points to the underlying ambivalence, here, as it is Lamarckianism that also allows for the possibility that specific traits of the Jewish identity, traits that might aggravate anti-

evident in *Totem and Taboo* [1913]; the implication that primitive man remains present in non-European tribes, and that in studying non-European tribal behaviour, we can, therefore, understand "the early stage of our own development"[187]. As H.D. puts it, "he had brought the past into the present with his *the childhood of the individual is the childhood of the race* – or is it the other way round?"[188]. And so, if we think about this intergenerational transmission between Egypt and Greece, evident in *Helen in Egypt*, we must acknowledge that this not only expresses divisions between East and West, even as it blurs them, but characterises the East as primitive. From here, we might make crude analogies between Helen-Isis, Achilles/Thetis, and our own current relationship with our colonial history and perpetual nationalism that facilitates the rise of Bracke's new subaltern. However, what I am suggesting is not that the poem should be mapped out and simplistically superimposed with contemporary problems, but that within the context of the poem's writing and semiotic eruptions, there is serious engagement with its own political environment, whether directly, as in the focus of Edmunds's analysis, or as the haunting suggested here. And that this environment begets and informs our own, an ancestry (or haunting), which has the potential to illuminate the ongoing resistance towards the racial other within contemporary Western socio-political and cultural discourse. With this in mind, I will spend the rest of the chapter looking at Sandeep Parmar's poetic and political engagement with *Helen in Egypt*.

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semitism, could be learned, unlearned, across generations, that they were "not necessarily fixed for all time" (p. 257). And so, Freud asserts both the broken identification of Moses as an outsider to the people he founded, as well as the unstable nature of this inheritance, at the same time as alluding to Jewishness as essential, an "essence" he avows as a non-Jewish Jew, in his 1930 Hebrew preface to *Totem and Taboo,* and which Rose quotes in her response to Said's contrapuntal reading (Said, 2004, p. 71).

[187] Freud, 2009, p. 1.

[188] 1985, p.12.

H.D. and Heritage in Sandeep Parmar

For Kristeva, the question is "'under what conditions' […] do [semiotic] eruptions 'correspond to socio-economic change'"[189]. Perhaps the latencies identified in H.D.'s text allow us to take this question forward through an analysis of how a contemporary poem engages with it. As I have tried to demonstrate, H.D.'s Helen was not written in a political vacuum, rehashing ancient anxieties, but was informed by, and infused with, contemporary concerns and context. Similarly, in *Eidolon*, Sandeep Parmar states: "it is my primary interest to re-interpret Helen for a new age, with new concerns"[190]. For this re-interpretation, Parmar positions Helen as a subaltern via Virginia Woolf's assertion that we cannot know the ancient Greeks, both within the poem ("so illogical is the picture of our deformed antiquity"[191]) and in the "Afterword". Parmar indicates that the unity of antiquity perceived by Woolf might be explained by the archeological era from which she was writing, suggesting the difficulty of hearing, crediting or recognising heterogeneity and nuance from the outside. This foregrounds a parallel between "monolithic antiquity"[192] and the monolith of Spivak's "third-world woman", a construction that results from a transformation, a semiosis, from the first and second-person – performative, active – to the constative third-person, which is "at once a gesture of control and an acknowledgement of limits"[193]. We know the difficulties of having Helen speak because she does not have access to the dominant discourse, silenced both as a woman, through a patriarchal literary tradition, and now by her position within an unknowable ancient culture. H.D.'s Helen, as we have seen, draws on (or is drawn by) semiotic language, as a language of the other, that disrupts the dominant gender discourse. If we perform a similar close reading of

[189] Margaroni, 2005, p. 79.

[190] 2015, p. 67.

[191] Parmar, 2015, p. 52.

[192] Parmar, 2015, p. 64.

[193] Spivak, 2010, p. 48.

Parmar's poem, we will be attempting to identify to what extent its semiotic language aligns with socio-economic change in relation to the dominant racial (and gender) discourse, and exposes what she describes as "the spectral nature of unrecorded or suppressed narratives, scapegoated for the greater purposes of citizenry, nation-building and global dominance"[194].

So, we understand the purpose of reading Parmar's poem in relation to H.D.'s, to understand how the contemporary poem might recover or activate the latencies within the modernist text. There are two initial aspects that I want to focus on. The first is how the Helen figures in H.D. and Parmar might relate. Spivak describes how "any version of advanced capitalism [is characterised by] the fragmentation and decentralization of the individual's putative political and economic control over her own life"[195], but I want to see whether, or why, the fragmentation of H.D.'s depiction might be read in terms of resistance to a unified self in Parmar's *Eidolon*. The second is to see how such resistance disrupts the symbolic order, how this disruption might constitute an active silence, that is, a semiotics of silence (much like Storch's "semiotics of noise"), that both acknowledges the difficulties of speaking for the other and confronts the dominant discourse that attempts to position the subaltern within its hierarchical, inclusive/exclusive structure. In this movement, we might see the potential H.D.'s fragmented and fetishised Helen offers Parmar's text to break down unity, the unity of the monolithic third-world woman.

The opening poem of *Eidolon* echoes that of *Helen in Egypt*, in that it foregrounds the illusory nature of Helen as a figure that we will later hear is both "polyvalent" and "indivisible"[196]:

> *It was not me, but a phantom*
> *whose oath*
> *a variable star*

[194] 2015, p. 67.

[195] Spivak, 1996, p. 101.

[196] 2015, pp. 37, 41.

mouldering in the reliquary
is doubt.[197]

In this opening she tells us that she has not "*unsealed love*", which appears to position her within the traditional system of blame and innocence, faithless and faithful. The taproot of this love is "*mouthing blackness*", and as such it invites comparison with the blackness of Helen-Isis. In drawing attention to the archeological drive to return to cause and origins, the text pinpoints a site of intergenerational trauma and haunting, both from the Homeric/Euripidean attribution of blame and H.D.'s subversion of that construct, exposing the literary heritage of Helen. She does this again when she quotes H.D. directly, lifting the modernist Helen to this Helen's lips: "*I am a woman of pleasure*"[198]. Parmar's Helen is psychically connected to her ancestor in Egypt, then, which re-presents intergenerational trauma as "the temporality of the bodily encounter", in Sara Ahmed's terms, where "the present encounter reopens past encounters"[199]. One effect of emphasising this literary genealogy[200], this artifice, its surface and form, is that we are made conscious of the writerly function of putting words in their mouth(s), which takes us back to Spivak's semiosis. Parmar has elsewhere pointed to the challenges or pitfalls of making the other intelligible by playing up to societal norms, related to the self-othering of the racial subject in British poetry, as the conditions needed for a growing prevalence of BAME poets in UK publishing and prize culture[201]. Similarly, by putting words in Helen's mouth, even in defence, the writer is at risk of perpetuating the old mythology. So, while H.D. works to undermine the terms of blame and guilt and agency, through

[197] 2015, p. 9.

[198] 2015, p. 26.

[199] 2000, p. 53.

[200] Parmar's intertextual references also include Sigmund Freud, Walt Whitman and Lawrence Durrell.

[201] 2015a.

the figure of the witch, for example, Parmar uses the opportunity of Helen-Isis to alert the reader to our own position in this contract, our own conditioning, in relation to the racial subject.

There are two further examples I want to think about. The first is an echo of Achilles' hands at Helen's throat: "Helen",

> a place of palor where
> silk shrinks around her throat
> exits the office
>
> mindless purposeless walking
> into and out of
> through and over
> up and around
> into and out of
> hands waving mindless purpose[202]

In aligning Helen's exit from the office, and her mindless walking, with the trauma, that is, the attack on the beach, she is again, linked not with Helen but Helen-Isis: her "*racial"* as well as literary *"inheritance*"[203]. Parmar invokes colonial guilt as H.D., perhaps, does, but Parmar does it at the moment Helen resists her position of resource or commodity within an office environment, refusing purpose, productivity. She is refusing to articulate intention or mind, and this dissent goes further than H.D.'s language clutter. Her refusal to present herself in language is essential to recognising Helen as herself, to not shoehorning her into a perceived or preconceived narrative. We see this possibility in Parmar's opening poem, which allows the *fairer woman* her song, without attempting to draw it from her: "*I have not […] seized the fairer woman / to purge from her her song*"[204]. This is an ethical act. Frosh, taking from Judith Butler, describes how "recognising the other means being aware of the limits of recognition, without forcing him or her to be whole and

[202] Parmar, 2015, p. 14.

[203] Doolittle, 1974, p. 13.

[204] 2015, p. 9.

knowable, without imposing a kind of narrative integrity"; what remains is a speculative truth that "revolves around interruption that is always present"[205]. The poem, then, is a struggle by Helen to keep this remainder unknown, undeciphered, free from the imposition of "narrative integrity" that the text, its author, but also its reader, might desire. She is "in Linear B / at Walgreens"[206], a decipherable language (unlike Linear A), but when we try to make sense of her, we are complicit in this act of deciphering. We are tempted by the text that offers Helen as artefact, her beauty admired as commodity, an arrangement of eyes and nose, like the "fair arrangement of pork and runner beans" on her husband's plate[207], and in our intrigue, we become the "scopophilic" voyeurs Frosh describes[208], as our devouring eye appropriates her.

Helen is abstracted by the eye, our eye, that looks at her. She is rarely fully present but seen in glimpses. She is collecting the paper from the lawn in her dressing gown, she is exiting an office, she is wearing a wine-coloured suit and making a string of failed phone calls. But if the poem diminishes her to the sum of her parts, Helen uses this disunity, which amounts to a lack of identity[209], to defend herself. The ambiguities of *Helen in Egypt*'s hieroglyphic readings offer useful equivocation of voice because, as Greg Morrison suggests, they open up "new ways for Helen to speak"[210]. They create tentative channels of communication without imposing any single, or definitive, meaning on her. Parmar's Helen uses similar ambiguities to defend herself, but rather

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[205] 2012, p. 253.

[206] Parmar, 2015, p. 46.

[207] Parmar, 2015, p. 34.

[208] 2012, p. 249.

[209] She is "of Sparta of Troy in Egypt / of no known address of no known nationality / refugee of no known conflict" (Parmar, 2015, p. 28).

[210] 2016, para 22.

than creating a plurality of meaning, her semiotic eruptions interrupt the potential narrative. Where we fail to decipher her, Helen resists the positioning of the text that would trap her within its social milieu, along with Bracke's infantry of subalterns. When Helen is listening "to whomever / is listening", her silence refuses the wider context: the "corporate-coffee-drone aproned in green", with its "free dessert!" and faux enthusiasm: "Real butter […] we're all really excited about this one!"; of the bank ticker pulsing time and temperature; the strip mall's motto: "We'll string you up!"; the church noticeboard: "Destination Heaven / Final boarding call"[211]. In all this shouting, Helen's silence becomes an action, a resistance, a way for someone without access to the neoliberal discourse to interact with this world without being consumed by it. It is an assertion of agency.

Peter Riley notes similar language obstacles in his review[212]:

Waking to a November morning
…. . to pins running across a yardage of wool
or headaches_____ the circular world
…… disfigured
…… by food
…… corn cobs in the sink gleam like teeth up her spine
Hurry up the bus goes
and its déshabillement goes ……loaming on after it

Riley says, "but what is understood by its 'déshabillement' (undressed) and how to make a verb out of 'loam' which has the undress following the bus, I couldn't begin to know." Although he speculates on possible meaning, he concludes, "my optimum reading […] is of privacies or half-known personal memories which subconsciously impinge on the telling, and are fused syntactically into it in defiance of rationality". The reader cannot go on with any sense of having understood, or at least not with any certainty. But we are not entitled to understand everything. These ruptures are

[211] Parmar, 2015, p. 20-21.

[212] 2015, section 4, para 1.

more fatal than the obscurities in H.D.'s text, forcing us to face what was unresolvable there. Maggie MacLure *et al.* suggest such ruptures or silences are a manifestation of "the impossibility of saying […] who one is, or what something means, or why someone did what she did". Silence, they say, quoting Derrida, exposes the illusory nature of speech as presence, as a mark of social authenticity: "this is an unattainable […] vision, where the wound between Self and Other, and the colonial guilt that it produces, is healed in the fullness of the authentic voice"[213]. Building on what was unresolvable in H.D.'s bilocation, Parmar, in maintaining Helen's remainder as unresolved, unsolvable, exposes Derrida's wound, and articulates this colonial guilt. Furthermore, she has demonstrated how, in our desire to look at, our desire to decipher or narrate Helen, we are inculpated. This accusation stems from Spivak. Her charge is that we are all influenced by the reaction-formation that takes us from a "desire to give the hysteric a voice" to making her the "scapegoat", that this is shaped by the dominant "masculine-imperialist ideological formation [that] is part of the same formation that constructs the monolithic 'third-world woman'"[214]. We are all implicated, all complicit, in producing the conditions for subalternity.

I would like to look further at the reader's complicity and Helen's resistance using Ahmed's framework of the stranger. Ahmed takes the position that the stranger cannot be defined merely as someone we do not know. She builds her framework out of the premise that the stranger can be recognised, differentiated from other others, from those that belong, that dwell, that it is this "differentiation that allows the figure of the stranger to appear"[215]. Perhaps we think we know Helen. She is the focus of the text, but we have already suggested that she is fragmented, barely there, and while there is a familiarity to those glimpses, the dressing gown, the suit, she is not quite

[213] 2010, pp. 495, 498.

[214] 2010, p. 48.

[215] 2000, p. 24.

human. She is "not woman, not god" but "disembodied", marked as different through her bodily disunity and god-like quality, which includes a sort of clairvoyance, because she knows "when the phone will ring / seconds before"[216]. These two attributes together, Helen's bodily disorder and sixth sense, using Goffman's theory of stigma[217], identify her as the figure of outsider, the stranger. The text invites us towards her, but it also keeps her at a distance, and so ambivalence is intrinsic to her position, as both near and far, a characteristic Ahmed discusses as relating to the stranger. To be in this dual position is yet another kind of bilocation for Helen. Over the next few paragraphs, I will demonstrate how the poem can be read in terms of bilocation, before moving on to how this focus on locality is central to Ahmed's work. This will allow us to explore the implications of the poem in terms of Ahmed's stranger, subject formation, and the role of the reader.

There are explicit references to bilocation and transnationality, such as the colonial uncle who asks where she stands "if it's England vs. India / at the Cricket"[218], and the poem moves between contemporary LA and antiquity, with the figure of Helen appearing in both realms. She is the modern woman that we have seen and she is "hauling an urn across a battlefield", "*in a glimmer of the Dardanelles*". She is "a range of other destinies". She "falls between two limits"[219]. But as with H.D.'s poem, *Eidolon* uses bilocation not only to place Helen across continents but to explore conflicts within one body, one locality. For example, by placing Helen in a lantern, she is "carried at arm's length"[220], which positions her as proximal but separated. This is significant in relation to Ahmed's work, which argues that it is only through the stranger, her differentiation and proximity,

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[216] Parmar, 2015, p. 10.

[217] 1986, p.12.

[218] Parmar, 2015, p. 17.

[219] Parmar, 2015, pp. 52, 24, 37, 23.

[220] Parmar, 2015, p. 18.

that boundaries and communities come to be defined[221]. Perhaps this is counterintuitive, but to understand how Parmar's text positions Helen, we have to think about how the environment of the poem responds to her. In the example of the lantern, Helen's strangeness is produced by a "tactile" economy[222], where her body is "expelled" from the community/bodily space. While the poem tells us little about the direct effect on the body that expels her, the receiver that becomes "in her hand […] some object / cut loose"[223], severed from the phone, is perhaps, indicative of that reciprocal injury implied by Ahmed's framework, even as Helen, and any perceived risk of contamination, is contained. Helen articulates this sense of containment, a reduced capacity to navigate space, when she questions, "*how is it* / *I am so far again from your gate*?"[224], "*again*" suggesting a constant quest for closeness that never progresses. In the search for intimacy, we see Helen trying "to make room / for herself at the table", but what we find is Helen, "closing and closing again the limits / of her blouse, her skirt / barrening the earth with her very existence"[225]. Though the poem suggests that this barrenness "*too, effaces me*", this is a profound, violent reaction by the environment to Helen's presence, similar to Ahmed's development of Kristevan abjection[226], which configures the expelled/strange body to, at once, become and maintain the border. She is, then, both, across continents and across bodily/community space in her duality of proximity and separation, effacement and provocation. She has been recognised as "out of place", in Ahmed's terms, because

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[221] 2000.

[222] "We could consider how some forms of touch have been means of subjugating others, or of forming the other as a place of vulnerability and fear […] Strange encounters are hence tactile as well as visual" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 49).

[223] Parmar, 2015, p. 18.

[224] 2015, p. 19.

[225] 2015, pp. 35, 50.

[226] 2000, p. 52.

she has "come too close"[227].

Similarly to the duality within the economy of touch, there is an ambivalence within the visual economy of the poem[228]. She is both beautiful, represented by her face "in *Hello!* magazine", and, as we have seen, effaced, which aligns with the ways she appears to leave no mark on the world, to gain no traction, the kiss that leaves "no trace / of red cognition", the barely there glimpses and those phone calls that will not connect. When she is waiting in line to pay for peaches, it is the "Mexican attendant" that provokes hostility, while Helen goes by unnoticed[229]. To be recognisable as Mexican, we know from the poem, is to be marked as unacceptable as jury member, and so, as a peer: "The 1913 local prosecutor training manual warns / no 'Jews, Negroes, Dagos, Mexicans'". Perhaps what makes Helen invisible here is her position as consumer. Often when she is addressed, it is in this role: "The TV […] greets her with a brief message / from our sponsors"; "Have you tried our spinach croissants before? They're really delicious!". Similarly to her encounter with the corporate drone, here she is misrecognised, undercutting the message to buy with her own interpretation: "*What you really mean [is] that we've been playing this game so long / it's hardly worthwhile*". When Ahmed talks about Louis Althusser's theory of interpellation, she makes clear the association with the law, the positioning of the subject as visible and subject to the law, and though the poem explicitly states that Helen is "lawless", that she is "without documents"[230], here, when Helen is hailed by the law, the law is capitalist consumerism.

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[227] 2000, p. 49.

[228] The visual economy "involves ways of *seeing the difference* between familiar and strange others as they are (re)presented to the subject. As a mode of subject constitution, recognition involves differentiating between others on the basis of how they 'appear'" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 24).

[229] Parmar, 2015*,* pp. 56, 25, 31.

[230] Parmar, 2015*,* pp. 22, 23, 27, 54, 23.

The difficulty is that in order to make room for herself at the table, to retain herself as herself, as I described earlier, Helen makes herself visible as stranger, and so there can be no room. It is arguable that in buying peaches and wearing a suit, Helen demonstrates some underlying desire to become dweller[231], that she colludes with the neoliberal economy, though the poem aligns the market with mental dysfunction ("then the market is / a florescent psychosis"[232]). But Helen remains "ambiguous", or misrecognised, as she aligns herself not with the white consumer but with the non-white checkout boy: "Helen offers sympathetically to the boy […] 'I hope someone runs that asshole over in the parking lot'"[233]. In her resistance to the role of consumer, of office worker, of purpose, she begins to be differentiated. Without purpose, Helen fails to become the good citizen, within the stranger discourse Ahmed identifies. The good citizen "watches out for the one who loiters" [234]. They are not the loiterer. They are suspicious, "rather than […] suspect". Helen is not the good citizen but provides, in her purposelessness, a purpose for the good citizen, who can be defined as "good [only] through the recognition of others as strangers"[235]. In her visibility and proximity as stranger, Helen is equated as dangerous within this discourse. When she is hailed by the law (capitalism/consumerism), she becomes visible as lawless. Even her beauty, which we have seen is presented as a commodity, further incorporates her into the visual economy. The night manager is "struck / by her poise"[236]. It might be a stretch to consider the negative connotations of "struck", though its position at the end of the line is emphatic. Nevertheless, this

[231] Ahmed, in her consideration of intersubjectivity, discusses how her disavowal of Aboriginality as a child could be configured as an "implicit desire for 'whiteness'" (1998, p. 115).

[232] Parmar, 2015, p. 31.

[233] Parmar, 2015, p. 32.

[234] 2000, p. 29.

[235] Ahmed, 2000, pp. 28, 29.

[236] Parmar, 2015, p. 18.

poised, beautiful woman is later compared to an apple "inedible in its beauty"[237]. In Ahmed's framework, for something to lack a "normal" attribute, such as the edibility of an apple, is to be stigmatised[238]. And so Helen is poisonous and her beauty is now her stigma, a visible mark of differentiation. When she refuses the hail of the consumerist society, she resists the intersubjective moment of subject formation[239], but when those around her, and we the readers, "judge [her] by [her] beauty"[240], we recognise her stigma, and in this moment are called as subjects, because, as Ahmed says, "the very act through which the subject differentiates between others is the moment that the subject comes to inhabit or dwell in the world"[241]. This underscores our complicity, exposing our collusion, our desire to inhabit, to belong.

By making us aware of our active reading, Parmar gives us a choice. She asks us to reconsider the configuration of H.D.'s Helen-Isis, her blackened skin, which has been coded as embodying a racial transformation, by drawing attention to the artifice. *Eidolon* describes black hands as "not really black but pious / made for marking out ash crosses"[242], and this denies the assertion of racial inheritance, replacing it with a heritage of Christian iconography. Helen-Isis can either be differentiated as stranger through her black skin (though she becomes a stranger within her own country and culture via our Western gaze) or as other, if her hands are merely, pious, purposeful. And to some extent, it is up to us to decide. *Eidolon*'s move here is, perhaps, a criticism, of that

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[237] Parmar, 2015, p. 30.

[238] Ahmed is using Goffman's terms regarding stigma (2000, p. 24).

[239] "the constitution of the subject through hailing implies that subjectivity is predicated upon an elided 'inter-subjectivity'" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 23).

[240] Parmar, 2015, p. 56.

[241] 2000, p. 24.

[242] Parmar, 2015, p. 39.

earlier attempt at recovering a black mother, its appropriation and use of blackface. Certainly, the mother as reconciliation is refused. The mother is "terrible and unpredictable as the sea"[243]. The child, too, is not the resolved Euphorion of H.D.'s poem. Using similar strategies of transformation as H.D., whose poem moved broadly away from war, the children in *Eidolon*, who "circle" under the "roar of a crop duster [that pitches] its pitiless circle" are transformed into "the outriggers of war [that] pitch and move in / a merciless circle"[244]. In these examples, we see how Parmar's text builds on H.D.'s, taking up the latencies identified in a contrapuntal reading, to demonstrate where linguistic eruptions might resist socio-economic racial inequity. But integral to this, we see how she also unties whatever solutions the reader might have hoped to find in Egypt, simultaneously accentuating our role and refusing us any sense that the traumatic inheritance of colonialism, that wound in which we are complicit, is in any way past.

Bilocation provides a simultaneity of place that challenges the patriarchal norms of Western society and literature, while the connected unconsciouses of Helen-Isis, and Helen in Egypt-Helen in California, invoke a racial and literary inheritance, and a simultaneity across past and present. If the earlier poem attempts resolution in an era of post-war decolonisation, *Eidolon* demonstrates resistance to resolution in the face of ongoing structures of neo-colonialism. In the next chapter, we will think about how the traumatic inheritance of empire and slavery might manifest in landscape and the body through various configurations of the collective unconscious.

[243] Parmar, 2015, p. 39.

[244] Parmar, 2015, p. 41.

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Chapter Two: Recognition and the Collective Unconscious in Mirrlees and Capildeo.

This chapter is structured in two parts. The first will focus on Hope Mirrlees's *Paris: a poem*, first published in 1920[245]. I will build a framework that takes from Jane Harrison and Henri Bergson's *Durée* to explore recognition in the poem, how it might be thought of as expressing a white European collective memory that holds traces of a repressed identification with the Global South within its plurality, and how this might hold political power. I will then, in the second part of the chapter, use this framework to navigate Vahni (now Anthony) Capildeo's writing in *Measures of Expatriation* from 2016, and how recognition might work for a contemporary non-European woman of colour, and the role of intergenerational trauma emerging from intersectional prejudices that contrast with the European experience.

Part One

Paris is set over a 24-hour period as a woman winds her way around the streets, along a route that saunters so wildly it is "virtually impossible in 'real-time'"[246]. In its meandering, and the performativity of flânerie, the poem might be thought of in terms of Jane Harrison's theory of ritual, which comes out of her ethnographic approach to pre-state peoples and will facilitate our exploration of the role of the Global South within the poem. What Harrison describes as the psychology of the imperfective holds faith, not with a future life, but in "an eternal actualized present": "Life […] felt not as a forward march but as a ballet, not as an inevitable evolution but as a kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria"[247]. The imperfective quality of being in time conveys, for Harrison, the complexity, heterogeneity, or warmth of the ongoing act. This heterogeneity is drawn

[245] Mirrlees, 2020.

[246] Parmar in Mirrlees and Parmar, 2011, p. xxxvii.

[247] 1919, p. 34.

from Bergson's theory of duration,[248] and can be seen in the poem, which has "an extraordinary way of conveying many superimposed cities at once"[249]. The poem is not one city in the present tense but contains the archaeological traces of the city's history, which are happening all at once and all the time. This plurality underpins the holophrastic, which, Harrison tells us, is an utterance that comes before individuation, the subject and object utterly entangled. And so, the plurality of the city is indicative of a plurality of consciousness, and, therefore, unconsciousness.[250] This is summarised in the opening line: "I want a holophrase"[251]. For Melissa Boyde, this suggests how "[t]races of the history of the city are interwoven [with] cultural commentary"[252], so that these historical traces, the Gambetta Monument and Père Lachaise Cemetery, the references to art and Christianity, combine with the Peace Conference and recent war dead to make the present moment intelligible. She is illustrating the relevance of Derrida's trace, "as familiarity itself, would not appear […] without the non-presence of the other inscribed within the sense of the present"[253]. The

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[248] "[Harrison's] theory intersects with and draws on […] Bergson, whose vitalist philosophy attempts to conceptualise time as it is experienced, as process, flux, and movement, an experience of reality as constantly changing and becoming. This he opposes to time that is no longer purely experienced but rather perceived by the intellect, immobilised, 'spatialised', as he understands it, and divided into categories, diminishing the richness and creativity of the psychic life" (Enemark, 2020, pp 46-47).

[249] Parmar in Mirrlees, 2020, p. 57.

[250] This also echoes Bergson's cone diagram, where a series of segments represent "the whole of the past in a more or less contracted form. The present can be understood […] as an infinitely contracted moment of the past, the point where the past intersects most directly with the body" (Grosz, 2004, p. 180).

[251] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 3.

[252] 2009, p. 35.

[253] 2009, pp. 36-37.

trace of the other in the plurality of the city facilitates the exploration of the Global South, its presence, or "non-presence", inscribed within *Paris*, and it is this, within the context of the poem's cultural allusions, that I want to foreground.

These allusions are what Matthew Mitton describes as "intertextual ghostings", mixed in with "snatches of overheard conversation" [254]. And these snatches, of place and sounds and sensations form, for Dorothy McMillan, "a kaleidoscopic view" of the city:

> The poem makes available a tray upon which the poet can place a collection of people and things that represent Paris in the past and the present and in the imagination. A single gaze will bring these things together in a meaningful way, but a turn of the platform will provide a different, but equally extraordinary pattern[255].

McMillan takes her lead from Mirrlees's essay "Listening to the Past", first published in 1926, which describes how the addition of petals, butterfly wings and colours can make the overall design "more beautiful"[256]. It is the nick-nacks of childhood treasures, rather than museum pieces, that contribute to the beauty of the present. She says her "aural kaleidoscope [is not] a lesson in history", but a way of listening in to "old fragments of human speech blown in from the waste places of the universe to be lost again for another thousand years". They are the voices of "Goethe" but also the "newspaper boy"[257]. And so, we can build a specific understanding of the kaleidoscope in terms of the poem, adding to Harrison's concern with movement and psychology, using the nick-nacks of the poem, its miscellany of newspaper vendors and coffee drinkers; how, while it presents a

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[254] Mitton says of these ghostings: "Sound and meaning are broken down into their bare components: there are different fonts, different languages; words are split into separate words and put into lists, The poem spirals and sprawls across the page. The cacophony of the city's myriad voices forces itself upon the speaker" (2013, p. 369).

[255] 2019, article number 184.
[256] Mirrlees, 2011, p. 89.
[257] 2011, p. 85.

collective historical moment, at a time of crisis in global systems of empire, it is a very personal, mutable gaze.

Though neither Harrison nor Mirrlees mention Baudelaire in their essays, Nell Wasserstrom explores how *Paris* emerges from the Baudelairian "double bind of attempting to capture the 'just now' by compulsively returning to past forms"[258]. The kaleidoscope is Baudelaire's image, his flâneur at the heart of the crowd:

> Thus the lover of universal life moves into the crowd as though into an enormous reservoir of electricity. He, the lover of life, may also be compared […] to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements presents a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life[259].

The kaleidoscope as an expression of Baudelaire's flâneur is similar to the movement of Mirrlees's narrator, and yet, in the last lines, her flâneuse is separated from, and looking down on, the city. The kaleidoscope, for Mirrlees, seems to invoke the distance it bridges. While Baudelaire underscores the movement and involvement of the subject through and with the group, Mirrlees's kaleidoscope seems to internalise the external world as it moves within and informs the speaker's gaze. I intend to use the sense of the subjective, and Mirrlees's engagement with French poetics[260], to demonstrate

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[258] 2020, p. 108.

[259] Baudelaire, 2010, pp. 17-18.

[260] Sandeep Parmar: "According to Jane Harrison, Hope felt that Paris was 'the end of her soul' […] One imagines that – by sheer proximity – she was lured towards the iconoclasm of French language poets like Mallarmé, Reverdy, Cendrars, Apollinaire and Cocteau. Their influence – the visual and sonic layering, the use of white space, caesurae and a unique typeface, the interest in psychological time and the pervasive concept of *durée* – is certainly evident when one reads *Paris*" (in Mirrlees and Parmar, 2011, p. xxv).

how the haunting identified in the poem can be thought of as an exploration of the unconscious, suggesting that Mirrlees, working in ways similar to an early surrealist mode, is interested in hallucinatory states and desire, and how this subjective experience might be mapped onto the flâneuse and the city. What I hope to establish is how the poem is not, or not only, a representation of postwar Paris, but identifies a rupture between self and other, consciousness and the unconscious. That is, how the kaleidoscopic fragments of the poem make visible an unconscious identification and/or repression of French culture with the Global South. I will do this by building on Bergson's concept of perception, which Elizabeth Grosz also describes as "kaleidoscopic"[261]. Her discussion emphasises the relationship between perception and action, and how the animate body introduces an unpredictability into the material world, creating the potential for a future not already contained in the past. Through the animate body of the flâneuse, I will argue, the poem is not simply a layering of past and present but engenders new political potential for future action, a future not predicted by the past but made possible through the perceptions of the body; what is highlighted, what falls away, as it/she moves through the material universe of the poem.

The undersong of desire in the poem suggests a common set of interests identified in *Helen in Egypt.* The semiotics of H.D.'s poem allowed us to explore the ways elusive traces within the poem invite us to critique binaries and the powers of dominant discourses in acts of textual and cultural resistance. Similarly, Wasserstrom identifies several binaries within *Paris* that are undercut by the text: "While Mirrlees's flâneuse is […] interested in 'defiling 'Mariolatry, she is also interested in undermining the reductive opposition between woman as angel/woman as threat"[262]. As with *Helen in Egypt*, reading *Paris* for its preverbal language offers the potential to hear the unstated desire haunting the poem. There are limits to how far a psychoanalytic reading can take us, especially

[261] "The image that is my body occupies the center of the material universe, and as it moves and changes, it brings about a kaleidoscopic shift in the orientation of that universe" (2004, p. 166).

[262] 2020, p. 117.

thinking about its structural Western bias in relation to the racial alterity and colonial commentary of the poem. There is, though, value in identifying those limits, which are the limits of working in the English language. Rukmini Bhaya Nair suggests that if the English language "has been the main instrument for the propagation of the numbing rituals of colonial indifference [how] can it ever be possible to discover true liberation through it"[263]. As Aimé Césaire suggests, it is "Humanity reduced to a monologue"[264]. Jane Flax discusses the need to "complicate psychoanalysis—a narrative of white Western subjectivity traditionally rooted in 'sexual difference'—by race, sexuality, and coloniality", and to challenge the way subjects enter the symbolic, "through the Law's demand for racial interpellation"[265]. But she also notes the merits of thinking about "gender (and race) within and as transitional space":

> Suspending the reality question or rejecting the construal of objective/subjective as a binary enables us to hold in mind the complexity of gender [and race]: it is a social fact; a socially constructed category; a possible site of intensely subjective fantasy, emotion, and meaning construction; and an effect of power with differential and asymmetric consequences inherent in varying positions within its grid[266].

This space can be thought of as choral, in its ambiguous, generative potential. It is also like the bridge Harrison stands on, halfway between art and religion: "and that bridge is Ritual. On that bridge, emotionally, I halt. It satisfies something within me that is appeased by neither Religion nor Art."[267] Quoting this passage, Parmar goes on to suggest of ritual: "[it] is the bridge extending into a forgotten past, and the space in which it can be experienced and re-experienced"[268]. It is both Mirrlees's kaleidoscope, as a bridge between past and present voices, and it is holophrastic, in its rejection, or suspension, of the subject/object binary. And so, Harrison's emphasis on ritual as social practice that engenders collective feeling and connects us across time informs the research,

[263] 2002, p. 202.
[264] 2000, p. 74.
[265] 2004, p. 915.
[266] 2004, p. 908.
[267] Harrison, 1965, p. 343.
[268] In Mirrlees and Parmar, 2011, p. xvii.

using a psychoanalytic approach that takes on the challenge put forward by Flax, to complicate the white, Western narrative by "race, sexuality and coloniality".

Underpinning the questions I want to ask is a framework built out of that sense that the familiar can only be known through the "non-presence" of the other within the present moment, which connects with Sara Ahmed's writing on ethnography and strangers. She puts forward two models, ethnography as cultural translation and the ethnographer as professional stranger. In both models, there is no shift in authority away from the ethnographer, who might be thought of as translating the strange into familiar terms or turning "strangerness into a profession, into a technique for the accumulation of knowledge. [It is] *the transformation of the stranger from an ontological lack to an epistemic privilege*". She relates this question of knowledge, of "who knows?", back to Spivak's question of "who speaks?" [269], and if we apply Ahmed's argument to Mirrlees's protagonist (and perhaps to Helen in H.D.'s poem, as the knowing stranger/translator in Egypt), we will see how she might be configured, and how her position or gaze configures the text.

Dreaming in *Paris*

The protagonist's gaze is characterised by its trance. Wasserstrom notes the poem's sustained interest in "trancelike states": "wherein the collapsed boundary between real and imagined is often effected through the aestheticization of the perceptual world"[270]. Given Mirrlees's experimentation and engagement with Apollinaire, can we understand walking and sleeping to be the same activity, the trance-induced recovery of the unconscious?[271] There are too many dreams and dreamers in

[269] 2000, pp. 60-61.
[270] 2020, p. 115.
[271] "From Guillaume Apollinaire to André Breton […]", Suzanne Nalbantian says, "there is an experimentation with the involuntary unconscious aspect of the memory process". She says: "For the surrealist poets, memory […] was to become involved with the aleatory functions of walking,

Paris for it to be incidental. There is a dynamic relationship between the dream-state and the artworks in the poem. In the action of walking to and between the paintings and statues, the speaker maps the surface of the city, but what if she also gains access to, or dialogue with, the unconscious? The paintings are, along with the flâneuse, climbing out of the subway, brought to the surface "unetiolated, one by one from their subterranean sleep"[272], a subterranean life risen into consciousness to be interpreted, perhaps, in the same way one may interpret a dream. Several critics comment on the artworks in *Paris*. Boyde notes that the poem "points to how realism has overtaken reality—soldiers 'camping around the grey sphinx of the Tuileries' are more recognisable as commodities of consumption"[273]. In Wasserstrom's analysis: "[Clio] transforms history into the 'beautiful' by making it static. This reduces moments of revolution and resistance in France's history to hanging 'quietly' because they have been painted into motionlessness"[274]. Here, both critics emphasise how reality and experience have been reduced to a two-dimensional knowledge of life. The poem seems to criticise this knowing from the outside, but this pause creates possibilities. Using a combination of Bergson's concept of perception and a psychoanalytic approach, we can activate memory as it relates to the present moment, to reanimate and revitalise what has been stilled with the potential for new meaning.

The poem's recurrent references to the dream-state and explicit reference to Freud dredging the Seine, "[waving] his garbage in a glare of electricity"[275], make a psychoanalytic reading consistent

writing or sleeping. The pen or the foot retrieved in an unstructured manner memory traces from the realm of the unconscious" (2003, p. 100). So, our flâneuse, whether she is walking, writing or sleeping, is in a trance-like state that offers a route into (or out of) the unconscious.

[272] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 8.
[273] 2009, p. 37.
[274] 2020, p. 126.
[275] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 21.

with the world of the poem. The poem's reference to Caesar implies how he (via Calpurnia)[276] dreams of his own demise. Similarly, the poem's reference to Vronsky: "Vronsky and Anna / Starting up in separate beds in a cold sweat"[277]. In the utterance of their anxieties, the poem offers a clear literalisation of a pre-Oedipal eruption, the repressed breaking through into the symbolic order of their written lives. There is a nebulous space, here, created and creative. Choral, even. Maria Margaroni defines the chora as a site "of crisis in signification" that displaces the speaking subject, and this definition seems applicable to the disruptive energy that forces an emotional interjection from those silenced figures, suggestive of a return to embodied experience[278]. These images interact with the poem's treatment of the dream-state, so that they can be understood as an undercurrent to the named surface, as the unconscious erupting into the here and now of the post-war city, the city of symbolic language, debate and authority, signified by the Peace Conference.

The narrator's experience is destabilised by the pre-Oedipal, then, but also, she is decentred, as she becomes submerged in an unconscious not, or not only, her own. Sean Pryor describes the poem as "less an individual's instant than a span of weeks and months collectively experienced"[279], leading us to consider how much a dream analysis is offering us insight into a collective unconscious. This sense of the collective chimes with Harrison's conception of the holophrastic, but the artworks of the poem give us access to a specifically white, European unconscious. Goya's painting, for example, a figure of the Spanish court, painted in the red, white and blue of the Tricolour, is mapped onto the Eiffel Tower ("Of the XIIIth Duchess of Alba / Long long as the Eiffel Tower"[280]), a monument built to mark the centenary of the Bastille. To map this memory of

[276] It is Caesar's wife that dreams of his fate. Shakespeare has Caesar call the soothsayer who prophesies his death "a dreamer" (1.2.28).

[277] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 15.
[278] 2005, p. 79.
[279] 2019, p. 46.
[280] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 5.

monarchic rule against the surface of a city that celebrates the Republic is to bring the past into consciousness. The memory is both ongoing and inherent to the meaning of the revolutionary landmarks, which, in turn, make post-war Paris intelligible. But what drives this eruption, what emotional weight does it express? "Clio" and the poem's cynicism towards artistic representations of history suggest anxiety[281]. But the beauty of Goya's painting[282] is only in part ironic. In the kaleidoscopic viewfinder, it becomes like the "butterfly's wing, rifled from your childhood's collection" that makes the present "more beautiful"[283]. There is a complexity of feeling, then, both nostalgic and anxious, repressed and returned, against a fragile landscape of post-war discourse.

The bilocation between surface and the unconscious demonstrates a plurality of emotion repressed beneath a present moment structured in language and authority. That the unconscious is conflicted suggests a further bilocation within the semiotic order, a conflict that can be explored through the liturgical chanting of street sellers. This passage mingles Christian iconography and capitalist commodification; loaves turn into a pre-Christian deity, and are remade as Christ in the manger, surrounded by workmen in Miriam blue. There is anxiety and/or cynicism towards the orthodoxies of both Christianity and consumerism. The liturgy of the hawkers becomes "the small dry voice / As of an old nun chanting Masses", which goes on to chant the literary dead (Voltaire and Chateaubriand representing opposite sides regarding the merits of the Catholic church), and then the "Benediction [droning] in Notre-Dame-des-Champs"[284]. But in the over-layering of religion and art and ritual, we can recognise Harrison's influence[285]. We see this in the Goya passage, too, where

[281] "Whatever happens, some day it will look beautiful" (p. 15).
[282] *The White Duchess* was painted by Francisco Goya in 1795.

[283] Mirrlees, 2011, p. 89.
[284] Mirrlees, 2020, pp. 18, 19.
[285] "It is at the outset one and the same impulse that sends a man to church and to the theatre" (Harrison, 1978, p. 1).

the artistic representation of the Duchess is said to show her pointing to the "Magi"[286], which demonstrates the Baudelarian compulsion to return to the past, via artistic and religious iconography. But Mirrlees also invokes the collective moment Harrison identifies in ritual: "that, among primitive peoples, religion reflects *collective* feeling and *collective* thinking"[287].

The collective moment – both the unconscious drives that erupt into the symbolic, and the symbolic itself – is a specifically European moment, a European memory reformed and restored, without any apparent context of the role of the French colonies. If slavery and its abolition, the attitudes to race, are also traceable in this memory, they remain or are re-repressed. It is also possible that the poem is resisting the impulse to narrate this complex history, that the poem resists that racial interpellation required by the Law to enter symbolic language. Flax asks us what a subject's truth means if "experience is constituted through various historical contingencies and power relations, and memory itself is not eidetic but fragile and constantly remade"[288]. The power relations, here, both socio-politically and linguistically, suggest that articulating the racialised other haunting the images in language, especially the English (or French) language,[289] as an instrument of the colonising power, can only further homogenise the complexity and diversity of the repressed

[286] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 5.
[287] Harrison, 2010, p. xiii.

[288] 2004, p. 907.
[289] We might, here, think about Jane Harrison's description of falling in love with a language, how literature is, predominantly, the conscious work of an individual, whereas language "is the *un*conscious […] product of the group, the herd, the race, the nation […] When we love a language […] we fall under the spell […] of a people imaged in the speech they have made" (1919, p. 5).

memory, truth, and experience. Memory, or its recovery, is akin to privilege, while opacity might be thought of in terms of resistance[290].

The holophrase suggests that the subject and the object are always entangled and interdependent. Similarly, the submerged other of the European collective unconscious is not absent but is a postcolonial undersong within the poem. A contrapuntal reading will allow us to establish what potential there is for a non-European presence and memory to be recovered, even if the act of recovery is problematic. Returning to the Goya passage, the Duchess pointing to "invisible Magi", pre-Christian figures from the East that are made present only in absence, suggests a latent non-European consciousness, though on the surface we might read this through Christian iconography. At this point, the Duchess is "languid" with "haschich", a signal towards colonialism, given the role of empire in its introduction to Europe[291]. There is a direct reference to empire on the same page, immediately below the painting: "Of ivory paper-knives, a lion carved on the handle, Lysistrata had one, but the workmanship of these is Empire". Ivory suggests the Ivory Coast, part of French West Africa when the poem was written, and if we also take account of the images that precede and follow the painting, the Gambetta Monument and the Arc de Triomphe, we begin to build a sense of

[290] Nicole Simek explores opacity in relation to Édouard Glissant: "In order to critique, to 'dismantle' the complex mechanisms of frustration and oppression, a text must remain opaque, must withhold something from the reader, at least for a time. On this reading, to be clear is not to demystify but rather *to simplify*; it is to opt for hermeneutic comfort over the challenges of incomprehension" (2011, p. 240).

[291] "The popularity of hashish in Europe arose in the aftermath of the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, when returning soldiers brought hashish with them to France. In Paris, the Club des Hashichins included Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, Alexandre Dumas, and Honoré de Balzac" (Warf, 2014, p 426).

the Duchess as this figure of the Spanish court during an era of empire expansion, surrounded by French patriotic landmarks. As such, she is marginalised as historical, two-dimensional, foreign, but also, in her relation to these landmarks, she becomes a projection of what the post-war city dislikes in itself, a Jungian shadow archetype, which is simultaneously repressed by the conscious moment and exposed by the poem.

If the Duchess works as a literalisation of this archetype, of the projection of what is abject about and within the self, she is also an echo of the concept in Frantz Fanon: "In Europe the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul"[292], and we can see the poem repeat this archetypal pattern through the musical motifs. The notated musical passage references an aria from Handel's *Rinaldo* (1711), a story set during the Crusades, where the King of Jerusalem and his sorceress lover are defeated by Sir Rinaldo and his leader, Goffredo. On the one hand, we recognise the Orientalist imperative to demarcate the West from the other during an eighteenth century in pursuit of political empire as the shadow archetype. David Irving describes how, in the early modern period, "Every act of musical performance was inextricably intertwined with religious or political cultural systems or imbued with expressions of social or ethnic identities"[293]. But also, William Weber tells us that Handel, specifically, was a central player in the "healing of wounds opened up during the Civil War. Anglicans and Dissenters came together within the Handelian tradition as they did in no other cultural context"[294]. And so this passage, a song about romantic and religious fidelity and liberty, in the face of a foreign and licentious captor, offers a typically Western gaze and, within that gaze, Handel becomes a balm for the post-war present. It would seem as though the Christian discourse is being offered as a way to reconcile the fractious present. And yet, to take this out of isolation, the homophonic aria is preceded by the silhouettes of Louis-Philippe which are an echo both of the musical score and the

[292] 1968, p. 190.
[293] 2010, p. 2.
[294] 2011, p. 54.

"crotchets and quavers" of African-American heads that "writhe in obscene syncopation"[295]. The poem, then, establishes a relationship between Orleans (Louis-Philippe) and New Orleans, parent-state and colony, via the Orientalist opera. How that relationship can be understood within the text depends on whether it accepts or subverts the other as the shadow archetype of white discourse. Here, we can think of Bergson's model of perception. In the gaze of the speaker, in the gap between perception and action, what of memory is activated, what is highlighted, what falls away? What political potential is there now as a consequence of this movement? The next paragraphs will explore this through a consideration of the musical motifs in the poem.

The aria, associated with the Virgin songs of "venial sins" at the Notre-Dame-des-Champs, contrasts with the mortal sins of the Moulin Rouge, where men watch "the Masque of the Seven Deadly Sins"[296]. But there is an irreverence towards Christian dogma in the poem that undermines the legitimacy of the Crusades, and Rinaldo's moral superiority[297]. If we are encouraged to align ourselves with Rinaldo against obscenity, we are, simultaneously, made to confront the prejudices

[295] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 21.
[296] Mirrlees, 2020, pp. 20-21.
[297] Consider the speaker's perspective over the city: "Tranced, / I gaze down at the narrow rue de Beaune. / Hawkers chant their wares liturgically". There are "Triptolemos in swaddling clothes [and] Workmen in pale blue" (p. 17). As noted, Mirrlees mingles Christian iconography and capitalist commodification, as the liturgy of the hawkers becomes "an old nun chanting Masses" (p. 18), etc. This aural layering of religious and secular, in and around the Hôtel de l'Elysee, is mirrored by the imagery of the garden at St Vincent de Paul, "the wall of sunset-sky [where] wasps never fret / The plums of Paradise" (p. 20), contrasting with the people "all black", seen across the Pont Solférino, like "Flies nibbling the celestial apricot" (p. 20). They are "like silhouettes" (p. 20), but the speaker recognises one of them as a priest, further complicating any easy binary between Christian and atheist discourse, and mapping a conflicted, ambivalent attitude.

of Christian society through the poetic unsettling of religious iconography, Orientalism and Western exceptionalism. Within the trance of the speaker's unconscious, the geography maps a bilocation between two semiotic, socio-political positions, where religious, political and cultural identity is in flux both across and within each space. That is, if the poem positions the black jazz musicians as a shadow archetype, repeating the pattern described by Fanon, and perhaps echoing his point about self-denigration, how the black man internalises the values attributed to him in colonial discourse,[298] it also recognises this racial trope, and so the binary of European and non-European is both apparent and questioned through these musical references.

Jazz, specifically, positions these questions as simultaneously, and urgently, past and present. Ted Gioia describes how New Orleans, with its French/Spanish heritage, was relatively tolerant within the US, with the rhythms of slave dances in Congo Square demonstrating resistance and persistence: "the Americanization of African music" brought with it the "Africanization of American music"[299]. There is the acknowledgement, in the use of jazz, that the other impacts and informs the self, but, ultimately, it is the West that provides the controlling force Irving defines in colonial counterpoint.[300] Gioia argues that the "tonal ambiguity" of the blues may have "originated when the newly arrived slaves tried to reconcile an African pentatonic scale with the Western diatonic scale [and] given its visceral impact, this approach to singing and instrumental

[298] "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: –primarily, economic; –subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of the inferiority" (Fanon, 1968, p. 13).

[299] Gioia, 2011, p. 5.

[300] "The musics of many non-European peoples (often inseparable from specific ritual practices) declined or were eradicated amidst the imposition of new cultural systems by European colonial empires, for these musics and their associated practices were frequently considered incompatible with or irreconcilable to the cultural frameworks of the hegemonic societies" (Irving, 2010, p. 2).

performance inevitably spread beyond the blues idiom into jazz"[301]. It was the enslaved, their music and the rituals inscribed within it, that were adapted, and what survived was allowed to survive. Early jazz, then, might be seen as a musical manifestation of a socio-political reality, though it is also possible to speculate about the process in a more active role, whether the affect of Westernising music that originated in African culture and ritual asserts control over the people it belonged to, in a way that is not true in the Africanisation of American music.[302]

The significance of this within the poem becomes clearer when framed by Ahmed's stranger theory. In her discussion of how home and identity might be reconfigured for those who have left home, Ahmed describes not "the heroic act of an individual (the stranger), but […] the forming of communities that create multiple identifications through collective acts of remembering in the absence of a shared knowledge or a familiar terrain"[303]. This is recognisable in the collective act of the jazz musicians in Montmartre, where the world, Paris, and the notion of home is reconfigured in the present tense of their playing. But this reading is problematic. Is the poem asserting a black unconscious? Nicole Simek describes the ambivalence around this concept, which is "appealing for its potential to serve as a grounds for linking individual subjectivities and collective histories, yet controversial for its potential reinforcement of biological conceptions of race that can be exploited for politically regressive ends"[304]. Does the poem configure the musicians as abstractions, or ideas of blackness? The poem's treatment of Handel's aria makes no attempt to conjure the composer, to make the individual stand for a homogenous racial identity, but the jazz music and the blackness of the musicians are conflated in those writhing quavers. In the context of a city/dream/text built out of

[301] 2011, p. 13.
[302] In relation to counterpoint, Irving says: "[…] whether counterpoint contributed directly to political hegemony, or whether it merely formed part of 'the mirror of reality, as Karl Marx (1818-83) would put it, we can see that counterpoint is a fitting metaphor for colonialism" (2010, p. 5).
[303] 2000, p. 79.
[304] 2011, p. 232.

references to empire, colonialism, blackness, in its art, its "Algerian tobacco"[305], its adverts[306], these musicians cannot be incidentally, or other than, black, but are black men in relation to white men:

> Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema. The elements that I used had been provided for me […] by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories. I thought that what I had in hand was to construct a physiological self, to balance space, to localise sensations, and here I was called on for more […] I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors […] I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships[307].

By blurring the man with the music, he is denied individual subject reality or memory and made to stand in for the history we see invoked. By using the language of the oppressor, the history invoked was written by the white man, his "details, anecdotes, stories". And so, the "historico-racial schema" Fanon describes is imposed on the black musicians by the poet-stranger in *Paris,* who is not just another exile alongside, and akin to, other exiles. She is the ultimate dreamer creating (imposing) a view of the city, its sites of power and strangeness, from a position of white privilege for a privileged audience.

The poem's use of the n-word to describe the jazz musicians quite brutally invokes this history of white privilege, and although Julia Briggs suggests that this, "like the lesbians in the following lines, introduce[s] a liberating discourse of racial and sexual alterity"[308], it is hard to argue that the language of the oppressor can configure emancipation, even taking generational differences into account. To invoke black history in this way seems to do so unilaterally from the coloniser's point of view and runs counter to my previous assertion that a non-European memory may be left latent as an attempt to avoid and/or expose racial interpellation. And yet, in its focus on the black musicians, the significance cannot be overlooked. It is not just jazz, not the Original Dixieland Jazz

[305] Mirrlees, 2020, p.22.
[306] "ZIG-ZAG / LION NOIR / CACAO BLOOKER" (p. 3).
[307] Fanon, 1968, pp. 111-112.
[308] In her commentary on *Paris*, originally published in 2007 and reproduced for the 2020 edition (p. 48).

Band (ODJB), an all-white ensemble that had the first recording contract and went to France to celebrate the signing of the Versailles Treaty.[309] In its explicit and violent invocation of black jazz, *Paris* is not invoking black history, the history of work songs and slave dances Gioia finds within the music, but the violence of colonialism that underlies its rhythms.

This concept seems to hold if we consider what Flax says about there being no precolonial memory: "Whatever might come after postcoloniality cannot be rooted in a freshly excavated, pristine precolonial past. Memory reforms as it restores, and no precolonial re-membering is available"[310]. She goes on to suggest that only "newly imagined worlds of difference" will provide an escape from inherited colonial indifference. When we think about the collective act of remembering in the jazz musicians playing, we might better think of this, not as the reconfiguration of the past in the present, or as an abstraction of blackness, but as an idea made incarnate in the imperfective, stretching into the past and the future. That is, to take the poem at its word: "I want a holophrase"[311]. The West remembers and "assigns" slavery as a past "wrong" because, Flax says, to

[309] "In an ironic and incongruous twist of fate, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB), an ensemble consisting of white musicians, was the first to make a commercial recording […] LaRocca and his apologists have offered a stridently revisionist history that places ODJB as key contributors to the creation of jazz" (Gioia, 2011, p. 37).

[310] 2004, p. 912.

[311] Mirrlees, 2020, p. 3. If the holophrase is defined by its proximity to the enduring and lived experience, "man entangled as it were in his own activities, he and his environment utterly involved", Harrison speculates on the possibility of a "holophrastic perfective […] The step out of the actual into the remembered and the hoped for is really a leap of tremendous genius" (1919, pp. 16-17). Though Harrison defines this in terms of the primitive man, the holophrase as a primitive utterance, Mirrlees does not parallel the holophrase with the black jazz. The whole poem is framed by its desire for the utterance, and so she avoids a simplistic primitivism.

acknowledge the full and ongoing harm "would destabilize the privileged's psychic and social worlds […] To ward off guilt and instability, the racialized subjects are situated as other and devalued, and the cycle repeats"[312]. Is it possible that the poem's desire for the holophrase is the desire to recognise the legacy of slavery in the contemporary colonial infrastructure, to expose the perpetual reconfiguration of the other's identity, and to require the reader to experience the complexity of that act in the face of infinite othering and denigration? Is it possible that Mirrlees's use of the n-word makes transparent this process and this harm? As abhorrent and indefensible as this language is and was, it contributes to the destabilizing effects of the poem, the undermining of socio-political and cultural binaries we have seen in the musical motifs. We despise the language because what it denotes and connotes is despicable, but also, if I am white-European, because it requires me to confront, and provokes guilt for, the ways I continue to benefit from white privilege.

Anne Anlin Cheng describes racialisation in America as a series of self-deceptions, or "misrememberings" because the history of slavery and colonialism "runs so diametrically opposed to the equally and particularly American narrative of liberty and individualism"[313]. She asks, then: "how to remember those transgressions without impeding the ethos of progress?" She uses and adapts Freud's concept of melancholia and memory to explore race, identity and positionality, and we can think about this in relation to Mirrlees's handling of blackness in *Paris*. Cheng suggests that loss is not processed as loss but becomes the "persistent and excessive" remembrance of loss, and that this remembrance is internalised. It becomes part of the self. She says: "By incorporating and identifying with the ghost of the lost one, the melancholic takes part in his/her own self-denigration"[314], and that this is a metaphor for how racialisation works. This seems an echo of Cesairé's *Discourse of Colonialism*, first published in 1950, which argues that brutalising the colonised in the name of civilisation makes savages out of the European coloniser. "Who distorts

[312] 2004, p. 917.
[313] 1997, pp. 50-51.
[314] 1997, p 50.

whom?" is Cheng's question[315]. She argues that the solution is not to recover what does not exist, some undamaged black identity, but to recognise invisibility as a condition of visibility. The flâneuse of *Paris* walks through a city punctuated with images of blackness and colonialism that are set into the background, in the posters on the walls. Even writing them in capital letters carries the risk of reading over them, rather than drawing attention. They barely register, except perhaps in their marketing function, emphasising the commodification of that which they are trying to sell. But the blackness of the quavers and crotchets, the disembodied heads of the musicians, cannot go by without recognition, and using Cheng's framework of race and melancholy, it is the speaker, here, that is constituted and reflected back to herself. The self-denigration of the original loss is what is remembered, recovered and remains intact.

Recognition, in Grosz's consideration of Bergson, is a tension between memory and perception:

> Bergson describes the movement from the object to memory as centripetal, and from memory to object as centrifugal. These two opposed forces […] converge to bathe the object in its potential, to make it available for present and future use in ways unrecognized by habit[316].

The paintings and architecture are triggers for recognition, but Bergson does not help us understand how memory contained in the present, if it is a white-European memory, might engender the potential for racial equality. However, by consideration of his model of perception/memory/action, it becomes possible to identify how the poem's use of the white collective memory engenders new political potential in/for familiar objects; though we know the poem resists any impulse to narrate the non-European other. That is, how the poem might be read as opening up the possibility of a future not contained within the past, albeit a future action not yet taken and, therefore, unpredictable. Mirrlees's holophrase becomes a political strategy that uses the tension between

[315] 1997, p. 57.
[316] 2004, p. 175.

perception and memory to expose the white-European narrative of post-war Europe and force the reader to recognise the trace of the other. As a consequence of this holophrastic entanglement, the question of "who speaks?" is firmly raised by the poem.

Part Two

What I want to consider, now, is how to build on Bergson's framework to take account of the non-European experience in a contemporary poem. That is, how might recognition work for a non-European expatriate, a post-colonial figure with no pre-colonial memory. *Measures of Expatriation*[317] centres around the non-European woman of colour, and has a preoccupation with the dream-state comparable with Mirrlees's flâneuse in *Paris*, and the Bergsonian interest in the dreamer as able to access a fundamental self[318]. And yet, in contrast to the fluent movement across Paris, the difficulties Capildeo's protagonist faces in her attempts to walk suggest a dissociative break that prevents her accessing her unconscious, if we maintain that walking and sleeping are "the trance-induced recovery of the unconscious". The analysis of *Paris*, in terms of racialisation and memory, suggested a conception of past/present that is held within the entanglement of subject and object, a repressed colonial trauma. But its expression is, necessarily, delimited and homogenised by a white-European memory. There is, then, the temptation to seek balance through a specifically black memory. Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, is ambivalent about this. He says: "In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization. I will

[317] Capildeo, 2016.

[318] "Thus the two types of multiplicity, the two notions of duration (what Bergson elsewhere calls time and Pure Duration) correspond to two modes of subjective experience, and, ultimately, to two instances of the self: a superficial self that conforms to social conventions and the pressures of language, and a passionate self, in touch with the heterogeneous real. In this context, dream experience becomes a figure for immediate experience. It withdraws us from the world of reflective consciousness and gives us access to duration" (Guerlac, 2006, p. 70).

not make myself the man of any past"[319]. While Bergson understands memory-proper as introducing unpredictability into the future, Fanon suggests that a re-imagining of a specifically black past risks the continuance of past inequality because it perpetuates the binary opposition of black/white culture in the present. To lament the lack of pre-colonial memory, then, is harmful, in Fanon's thinking. But in Alia Al-Saji's reading of Bergson, it is time experienced as duration that offers the potential for decolonisation, in that we are forced to acknowledge how the past is reiterated in the present and shapes the future[320]. By exploring *Measures of Expatriation*, I will identify some ways the non-European woman of colour experiences and expresses time/memory, without encasing her, in Fanon's terms[321], within the construct of a black identity, whether it be imposed by the white West or drawn up by the "Negro" to "legitimate" his past[322]. On the one hand, I will argue that the legacy of colonialism is an intergenerational trauma, which is, to some extent, in conflict with Fanon, who argued that "I do not have the right to allow the slightest fragment to remain in my existence […] to be mired in what the past has determined. I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors"[323]. On the other hand, a return to the past, through memory-proper, may not be the only access to Bergson's fundamental self. While Bergson's framework is at odds with Fanon's, they are both arguing for change, for the need to recreate oneself, to generate unpredictability, to "*leap*", as Fanon describes, to introduce "invention into

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[319] 1968, p. 226.

[320] "the linear time of progress could be conceived as a ruse of empire—a way of hiding and exculpating present racism by positing racism to belong to the defunct past […] colonialism is not a bygone event but a world system whose effects and affects continue to perdure and structure our present" (2019, p. 102).

[321] "No attempt must be made to encase man, for it is his destiny to be free" (1968, p. 230).

[322] Fanon, 1968, p. 225.

[323] 1968, p. 230.

existence"[324]. Given this alignment in principle, if not method, I will look to Harrison's interest in the durational, to search for some synthesis of these ideas. This composite framework will allow us to read Capildeo's poem, not as a counter to *Paris*, but as one possible parallel, or perspective, of many.

"The Book of Dreams / Livre de Cauchemars" is a six-part poem within *Measures of Expatriation*. In part I[325], the dynamic between the speaker and the other women resists definition. The country is not England. It could be Trinidad, especially as the later sections of the poem discuss Trinidad directly. What is clear is the hybridity embedded in the scene. The women dress in suits, which "would be elegance in England. In this country it meant that they did not work for themselves. They would be slashed and draped if they were independent". The slash and drape of a sari suggests independence, but also connotes Indo-Trinidad, while the English suit suggests "an important, insecure job". There is something counter-intuitive about the pairing of importance and insecurity, and again, in their opposition to independence. These women look important but are insecure, dependent. They dress like an Englishwoman, recognisable to the speaker, who, perhaps, also dresses like an Englishwoman. What does her own dress mean, now, to her? What does it mean to the women? Not elegance because this is not England, but in layering cultural signposts, and defining them as either England or not England, England is the central presence, here, even in our absence from it. It is an English poet laureate that will be copied, built upon and taught to the "lambsfuls of students". And "lambsfuls" draws attention. Perhaps we think of the idiom of sheep in relation to the poem's interest in copies. Certainly, we think of children, innocence, purity, but in Capildeo's corruption of spelling and expression there is a corruption, or impurity, to the meaning, which reminds us of the cultural specificity of idiom and connotation, the multiplicity of language

[324] 1968, p. 229.

[325] All quotations from part I can be found on p. 60.

even when we appear to all be speaking the same one. As Fanon states, the language one speaks defines the world one possesses, as "expressed and implied by that language"[326]. And so, the speaker and the women may be intertwined by their shared English language, but are, simultaneously, separated by the potential range of ways they use it.

There is, then, a sense that the subject and object are both incongruent and entangled in this dream, which brings us back to the question of "Who speaks?"[327], in a place where England pervades the not-England, blurring the boundaries. In this hybrid space, the cultural signposts that would be familiar in England, to a person familiar with that country's heritage, take on altered meaning, become uncanny in their strangeness. The speaker both recognises and does not recognise the women's attire. Are these women her double? Copies? "Rough photocopies, cut-and-paste jobs"? Is she "bad in the original", like the Tennyson she cannot be sure is Tennyson? The linguistic repetition in the description of the notebook mirrors this play with reiteration[328], a heightening of detail with each retelling, until the memory of an insect is introduced to the perception. How she experiences the present moment is affected by the memories it triggers. The memory-image of an insect makes the notebook something other than it was before. The memory of a Tennyson poem makes the copied extract in the notebook both familiar and uncanny. The poem's interest in reiteration invites us to experience not-England as a reiteration of England, tempting us to define the former in terms of lack; that is, to consider difference in degrees of Englishness. And yet, in this dream-state, this simultaneity of place, space has collapsed into time, where the past is made

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[326] 1968, p. 18.

[327] Spivak's question cited in Ahmed (2000, p. 61).

[328] "A ring bound notebook was given to me. A notebook as large as a music book was given to me. A large notebook with a laminated cover was given to me. A shiny green notebook was given to me, recalling the carapace of an insect seldom seen these days."

present through the memory-images, and differences are not distinct but overlapping, confused. How to compare the sari with the suit, given the multiplicity of meanings and their contingency on place, when place is destabilised? The phrase "typescripts bad in the original" questions the basic notion of originality, its existence, its status. One is not less than the other, here, where "orderliness" is "a bewilderment", the smiles are "semi-pleased", the corridors are "semi-open" and the "much-used places" are "half-built". Nothing is one thing whole. Similarly, the speaker, who both "would be agreeable [and] did not want to agree to something", does not occupy a stable position juxtaposed against the "helpful women". We don't know what the memory-images of the poem tell us about her, or what her clothes might mean to us, to her, to the women. She cannot recognise, "here", the Tennyson she might recognise elsewhere. She is made strange to herself, through the strangeness of her bilocation. The text, then, both appears to provide and then undermine a fixed voice grounded in the binary of England and not-England. It is more critical of the illusion of a fixed position than it is critical of any specific voice, resisting attempts to make the speaker stand for either/or. By unsettling the binary, the question of "Who speaks?" is in progress. In Bergson's terms, part I of the poem goes some way to move the discourse away from what is quantifiable in time or lack, towards the realm of quality. As Grosz describes, qualitative differences cannot be "compared to each other, for these are differences that are in the process of being made rather than already given. Sexual difference and racial difference cannot be understood productively *except* in terms of such internal difference"[329]. Capildeo sets up colonised and coloniser as differences in degrees of Englishness, as though to be more English/less English can be measured in terms of abundance/lack, and then subverts this framework, demonstrating its absurdity.

[329] 2004, p. 161.

Part II[330], similarly, sets up a dynamic between the speaker and the "nice ladies". The speaker "would not normally have been on a walk with such nice ladies". The dynamic, in this section, centres around knowledge and fear. The women who buy things in "a pound and a crown" chatter through "strong teeth" about their children's activities and schooling. While the speaker's journey is weighed with plodding effort and uncertainty, they saunter "like daytime", which suggests an internal sense of direction, or security, that allows them to be concerned with their children's education, in contrast to the speaker, who perceives a more immediate threat to their survival. She describes the lack of provisions they are heading towards: "aspirins, spectacles, flour, there will be none of these things. The factories, and the mills of God, alike will stop grinding. / None of these things entered their vision". But she is also concerned with the difficulties and distance of the journey, her inability to see the destination: "It was hard to discern it as river. It ran in loops. There was no way of crossing directly to where we were going […] The distance was amethyst mist.". The "nice ladies" do not perceive the situation as dangerous in the way the speaker does. She is isolated in the persistent daylight between the darkness behind them and the water ahead[331]. The women expect to be home soon, but our protagonist's journey seems both unlikely to end and without movement.

To understand the difference between the speaker and the women, we must recognise that the differences in their respective experiences are qualitative. That is, they are not presented as degrees of sensation that could be counted and compared quantitatively, as more/less, abundance/lack. Bergsonian time is a qualitative experience, and the text seems to comment on this by creating the potential to map time as a line through the landscape where this journey takes place, but then

[330] Capildeo, 2016, pp. 60-61.

[331] "I tried to maintain a sense of direction. / In the distance was water. At our backs, the town, on which darkness had fallen. Day persisted, eggshell and semi-precious. I could / not see with whom, but we had to keep up" (2016, p. 61).

counters that possibility by having the river run "in loops", creating that sense of immobility. Where this place is, again, non-specific. Whether the line "a pound and a crown" refers to weights or currency, it suggests England, or if pounds are a given in England, it is more suggestive of Englishness. It references empire, monarchy and sovereignty, sterling as the ex-currency of ex-colonies. These women who buy goods in British units are attributed with something of Englishness, but we seem to, again, be in not-England, where the land itself is both "flat and round" as a coin, as currency. So, as the ladies move with ease, they are also at ease with the colonial legacy. A privilege, to move easily through this complicated history made present underfoot; to move at all. But it is a misguided ease, our speaker tells us. These women are living into the future of their children's prospects, but they fail to perceive the existential danger. Why the speaker has this knowledge is unclear. Whether she is reliable is not a given, either: "It was said that water reserves would be hit next", but said by whom? And why does she know and not others? Perhaps she has a different kind of privilege, one grounded in local knowledge, employment, experience. But it is equally possible that she is basing her prediction on the memory of past experience. Perhaps that is what the other women are doing, too, and so all we might be able to understand, from both the women's experience of this moment and the speaker's, is what they have experienced before.

Read this way, we can discern the qualitative differences between the speaker and the women, how their past experiences are reflected in their perceptions of the present. But Bergson would suggest that as animate beings, they have the ability to create a pause between perception and action that provides the potential for something new in the future[332]. We saw this with Mirrlees's flâneuse, the

[332] "'My body, then, is the aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images, receiving and giving back movement, with, perhaps, this difference only, that my body appears to

European memory-images that informed her gaze and generated the space for the trace of the other and potential new meanings. Capildeo's language is full of imagery, and we have seen the memory-image of crown and currency affecting our speaker's gaze and invoking a colonial legacy, but what is striking in this part of the poem is how much she cannot perceive. Behind her is darkness. Ahead is mist. She cannot see a way to cross the river, nor with whom they were supposed to keep up. The women cannot see the peril in the future[333], but, of course, the lack the speaker expects is not yet in her vision, either: "As yet we could see nothing". In contrast to *Paris*, then, what is being emphasised through all this not seeing is an absence of memory-images beyond the colonial legacy, underscored by the speaker being stuck to the spot, unable to access the trance-like state of walking. This difficulty escalates through the other parts of the poem, which we will come to, a recurrent barrier to the speaker's attempts to walk/recover the unconscious, and we can read this in light of Flax's argument, as reflecting the absence of a deeper, specifically pre-colonial, memory[334]. So, even if we bear in mind how the speaker's experience of time is represented in qualitative terms, as she is isolated from, and so transcends, spatial time, without access to pre-colonial memory what can she bring to the pause between perception and action that does not perpetuate the past in the present?

Part III builds on the difficulties of the previous journey. It opens: "Night in another place. Again the having to keep walking."[335]. The road, itself, is hostile, "a broken way, not meant for pedestrians. The pavements give way to grass verges that dip into the straggle of nothing." If the road is the road back through memory, it leads nowhere, and the difficulties of keeping going are

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choose, within certain limits, the manner in which it shall restore what it receives'" (Bergson cited in Grosz, 2004, p. 165).

[333] "None of these things entered their vision" (2016, p. 61).
[334] 2004, p. 912.

[335] 2016, p. 61.

many. And yet, the imperative, the "having to". The poem does not offer an overt explanation as to why, but there are two themes that are striking about this. The first is how the pavements give way to nature. The brokenness of the manmade and the creeping in of the woods, the "occasional deer startling the infrequent transport […] the road that widens to savagery of raggedness"[336]; these imply a return to, or of, something, a landscape, that was there before the people that built on it, accented by the line: "I know this road. It runs south to the next town, which over a thousand years ago was the greater, and accessed by river."[337]. The land is reclaiming itself from those that took it for themselves. We might privilege nature in this reading, or read it as a parallel of settler guilt, that aligns those that have come to reside here, or that facilitated population shifts through empire and indenture, in opposition to savagery. But any dualism or comparison brings us into the realm of the quantitative and lack. We struggle to measure what succeeds and what fails. Nature prevails, rather than succeeds. The road cohabits. If we describe the road as failing, it is because it fails to lead them somewhere, to the next town, to memory-proper, anywhere. Even here, it does not fail because the road is broken but because there is nowhere to go. The pre-imperial past is not intelligible, however acutely the speaker experiences the need to return. This underscores the problem we identified in part II. If there can be no deeper access to memory, this absence prevents free will, in that there is no memory-proper to interrupt the movement from perception to action, only habit-memory, an automatic response that reiterates in the present what has gone before[338].

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[336] 2016, p. 62.
[337] 2016, p. 61.
[338]"The brain enables multiple, indeterminable connections between what the organism receives (through perception or affection) and what is available for it to act on, making possible a genuine freedom from predictability. Freedom in [Bergson's] conception is neither the absence of causes […] nor the range of options or possibilities available (free choice) but the capacity to act in concert with one's past to bring about a future not contained in it" (Grosz, 2004, p. 168). If colonialism has caused a breach in terms of there being no pre-colonial memory, it has also impacted the potential

That need to return is akin to how Fanon describes the impulse to return to, or reinvent, a black past. He would argue that it is not by a return of a pre-colonial memory-proper that the future is changed but by disalienation: "through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self"[339]. The significance of the more recent past in the poem, the memory of the parents' house, for example, might illustrate this idea. From the direction of the house, which could also be "the way there, tonight", there are woods and a girl with tapering legs "like the tail of a fish", dressed in "mossy green"[340]. With our interest in walking, it is significant that her legs are so insubstantial, but this does not seem a disability. Rather, the girl jumps in and out of the grass with ease, while the speaker knows that if she jumps in, it will consume her[341]. As the fish-girl appears to recede back into the woods, she and the parents' house seem interwoven with nature, as close to that raggedness as to the road the land is reclaiming. That the girl has come from what could have been the speaker's childhood home, suggests she could be the memory of her earlier self, or who she might have become if she had not lost sight of the woods. Or she is a potential future self, if going back is not about going back but creating unpredictability in the future. But the speaker keeps to the road. She pushes away the past/potential self, anxious not to get lost in the grass. So, even when there is the potential to access memory-images, there is an ambivalence, which resonates with Fanon's ambivalence regarding a return to the past. Capildeo's speaker does "recapture" herself from the grass (and the past) that would consume her. Mirrlees's flâneuse faced no such threat. She moved fluently across a city at the centre of the French Empire, while Capildeo's stutters along a broken road of a peripheral ex-colony. The qualitative differences between these two positions emphasise the precarity of the latter, and the difficulties of her movements are, potentially, an embodiment of

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for those whose memory it belonged to, to exercise free will, to "act in concert with [their] own past to bring about a future not contained in it".

[339] 1968, p. 231.

[340] 2016, p. 62.

[341] "The lid of grass ripples and shrugs. It is shutting over me, as it did not shut over her" (2016, p. 62).

that colonial trauma. Where Bergson sees unpredictability as a step towards potential new meaning, the uncertainty of change in an already uncertain/traumatised existence is not addressed in *Paris* but becomes apparent here.

The dreams in this "Book of Dreams" describe situations the speaker(s) finds distressing, or at least discomfiting, but the colonial trauma we are talking about is intergenerational, extending out of the past to inform the perception of the present moment. There is no pre-colonial memory, but the memory-images that are accessed contain the legacy of that rupture. The different perceptions and reactions between the "nice ladies" and the speaker in part II could be described in these terms, the unease and hypervigilance of the speaker as a symptom of intergenerational trauma. The memory-image of the speaker's parents' home in part III, similarly, contains the trace of that core wound. And yet, if that trace within the memory-images of the recent past suggests a way forward in terms of Bergsonian free will, the ambivalence of the speaker in part III suggests we need to be wary of using such an inheritance as a solution to itself. Part IV makes more of the allusion to heredity via V. S Naipaul, who is the speaker's father's first cousin. She is being interviewed but none of the questions pertain to her directly, only to her famous relative. The sequence demonstrates how Fanon's concept of disalienation might counter the potential for misrecognition: "What about V. S. Naipaul in the fifties and sixties? Was he in England then? – I was born in Trinidad, in 1973"[342]. She is asked about his views on women, vegetarianism, but returns to that which is within her life experience. The speaker asserts the absurdity of some of the questions but also the absurdity of expecting her to know the answers: "Abortion is in most cases illegal in Trinidad. Is there no coded reference to that in any of Naipaul's writings? – I have not read all of Naipaul's writings"[343]. To return everything to one's own lifetime, as though the familial, cultural, socio-political heritage has no impact would be naive, but what the poem brings home, here, is how any interest in the speaker

[342] 2016, p. 63.
[343] 2016, p. 63.

is only through her relationship to someone she feels little to no relationship with. What the consensus wants to know is not her as an individual, but a racial/cultural memory that places her only in relation to, and representative of, an ancestry they assume she identifies with. Her answers reject this premise and align with Fanon's assertion that he is not "slave" to the past of his ancestors. Rather than whether there is recognition between the speaker and V. S. Naipaul, what seems most pertinent is how any potential recognition is used by her interviewers to erase the speaker.

The other side of this scene is: who are these people asking the questions and what informs their agenda? "[A]methyst [and] mist" are two of the colours used to describe what these people are wearing, colours repeated from part II to describe distance. Other colours, here, are reiterations of nature: "heather, forest […] sea blue, seal pelt", but what they are not is natural. They are "the expensive version of washable […] iron-proof, roll-safe, rucksackworthy". Distance and artifice, then, is what we know so far. This sleight of hand between nature and fabrication is also emphasised in the environment, the "shrub" is "ornamental" and "specially planted", the dust is "cousin to orange pine ice cream"[344]. If the raggedness of the landscape reclaiming the roads in part III represents nature prior to the people that built on it, the nature in part IV is constructed; perhaps by the people wearing its colours. The roads here are even and "broad like hope in a school-syllabus anthem"[345], and while we have been looking to see whether the roads in this poem can lead us back to memory-proper, this road, while sound underfoot, is comparable to the forced celebration of hope, while the shoes the speaker wears are not her own. This road seems only capable of taking us back to a past contrived by those that formulated the anthem, or the questions; questions that are based on assumptions that place the speaker not in her own shoes, not as an individual, but standing in for a perceived heritage.

[344] 2016, p. 63.
[345] 2016, p. 63.

The last two sections are in the present tense, but as we move back into the past tense in part V, the speaker appears to be relaying a memory/dream of a younger self, as she travels to the beach with her mother and her friend. The house belongs to a man the speaker does not know, and although she and her friend might be assumed to be similar ages, in her incomplete knowledge, the speaker is marked out as child-like against these three adults: "I did not like the way my mother and my friend both knew him and smiled at him. I had not expected him or even the presence of his house in this place"[346]. Here, then, is an instance of memory-proper, an image for the speaker to reflect on and to make new use of the material world.

The memory describes an idyllic setting, but there is an undercurrent of violence and vulnerability that pokes at the surface, "oxblood paint under the gun-grey paint"; "bone-white sand". And although the speaker's distrust of the man has given way to a desire to wade towards him, "where the sun sinks", she tells us it would be "death" to do so[347]. The scene holds within it something threatening, though the speaker is not at physical risk. So why is her walking the most disabled in this section of the poem? The water is easy footing for the man. He laughs and walks backwards, but for her the sea is a barrier, physically preventing her movement:

> Then the sea chopped at me and laid rope after rope around my calves and ankles. I staggered on the spot […] The open-eyed bather feels all her limbs being dragged under […] her eyes are confounded by the utter and absolute darkness beneath the stirring sand.[348]

Walking as a means of recovering the memory-proper, within a memory, suggests that there is another level of unconscious, and, in this instance, that it remains hidden, in "absolute darkness". If we take the two symptoms together, an absence of memory and physical disability, one possible interpretation is that we are seeing a trauma response, a dissociation that suggests a functional neurological disorder (FND). With FND, emotional responses in the brain interfere with how the

[346] 2016, p.64.
[347] 2016, pp. 64-65.
[348] 2016, pp. 64-65.

body and brain communicate. It can cause memory and motor problems, and is associated with stress and/or trauma, often unacknowledged and not dissimilar to Freud's initial studies of hysteria. And so, though the sea is navigable for the man, and the speaker has no organically caused physical disability, the sensory information of the sea around her legs overwhelms her and she is paralysed. The trauma is not expressed verbally but embodied in the preverbal/somatic memory of Capildeo's expatriate[349]. The violence buried beneath the surface of the paint is, then, a reflection of a buried trauma. And the ambiguous figure of the man, who is both present and absent, may well suggest an ancestry, given that he is described as "many"[350]. Not one that erases the speaker's individuality, but one she is both shocked to come face to face with and drawn towards. Across these five sections, then, Capildeo uses the body to speak the experience of her narrator(s), without making her stand for a monolithic blackness or colonial perspective, but articulating a collective deep wound that pre-dates the individual and lies underneath her present.

There are theoretical models of trauma that can help us underpin this interpretation of the poem. The absence of memory, the "absolute darkness", in relation to Bergson, suggests the need to recover that memory, in order to achieve free will. Similarly, in relation to trauma, to bring that memory into consciousness could alleviate the symptoms of FND, by assimilating the unassimilated traumatic experience. This is, of course, the principle of psychoanalysis, and if we turn to more contemporary trauma theory, Cathy Caruth describes the link between psychoanalysis and literature

[349] Bessel van der Kolk puts it like this: "Confronted with horror […] the frontal lobe shuts down [and] the emotional brain, which is not under conscious control and cannot communicate in words, takes over. The emotional brain (the limbic area and the brain stem) expresses its altered activation through changes in emotional arousal, body physiology, muscular action" (2015, p. 176).

[350] "Whether or not he in the sea had vanished I do not know; his satisfaction was at my back and his house was still in front of me. I felt he was many" (2016, p. 65).

as being in "the complex relation between knowing and not knowing"[351]. Caruth's exploration of Freud's "accident" suggests that a violent event cannot be fully known, not because of the latency period between the experience and the emergence of symptoms, but because of "the inherent latency within the experience itself"[352]: it is the shock that lies at the root of this phenomenon, that makes the violent event defy "simple comprehension"[353]. Perhaps the shock of the speaker's encounter with the strange man, in part V[354], is its own traumatic event. There is the potential of an arranged marriage, "if all went well"[355]. And yet, the scene is not overtly violent but is haunted by violence, in the paint and sand, which suggests that the trauma is not within this moment but informs her perception of it. Without discounting the possibility that the speaker has direct experience of trauma, the focus of the scene is the dynamic between her and this man, and that he is both enigmatic and "many". If the references to an Indo-Trinidadian background elsewhere in the poem allow us to make this leap, that he is an ancestral figure, we can think of this encounter as constituting, in Caruth's terms, a site of "historical witness"[356], because the experience is an inextricable double-telling between the "many" (displaced, indentured, colonised, settled?) and the one who survives. This seems to offer recognition without assuming the identification/erasure that was problematic in part IV.

The unconscious imprint of intergenerational trauma within more recent memory-images may offer the means for accessing some relief, along the lines of contemporary trauma theory, though the memory remains incomplete, unassimilated, the violence unutterable. The latencies described by

[351] 1996, p. 3.
[352] 1996, p. 17.

[353] 1996, p. 6.

[354] "I had not expected him or even the presence of his house in this place" (2016, p. 64).

[355] 2016, p. 64.

[356] 1996, p. 8.

Caruth, via Freud, seem to imply that the work of psychoanalysis can strive towards recovering what has been repressed but cannot access a memory that did not form at the time, and so assimilation can only ever be partial[357]. This suggests that the original traumatic memory is not necessary for the speaker to gain some relief from her embodied trauma response via psychoanalysis. But if we recall the Western bias of psychoanalysis, which Fanon notes[358], and we observed in *Paris*, we remember that Freud's assumptions presuppose the universalism of the European man[359], assumptions, which Stef Craps argues, are perpetuated by Caruth[360]. With this in mind, we can recognise how the poem does not accept psychoanalysis as a resolution. Rather, it locates and challenges Eurocentric assumptions, and the pathologies and therapies of Western trauma theory. In part V, we know that to reach the memory, to reach the man at the horizon, "would be death". And in part VI, an actual return, which we might think of (in psychoanalytical terms) as being essential to healing, ends with the sea consuming not only the boys playing football in the water, but all of them:

> Someone had developed the bay since our last visit […] But a dark cloud
> was blowing up, between the open sea and the edge of mountain. And the

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[357]In keeping with van der Kolk: "[H]igh arousal disconnects other brain areas necessary for proper storage and integration of incoming information" (2015, p. 176). So, traumatic memory is incoherent, fragmented as sensory and emotional tracings.

[358] "Freud and Adler and even the cosmic Jung did not think of the Negro in all their investigations. And they were quite right not to have. It is too often forgotten that neurosis is not a basic element of human reality." (1968, p. 151).

[359] As Mrinalini Greedharry observes, Freud presupposes "that women, children, neurotics and savages are all less 'civilized' than European men", that the equating of these groups makes them simultaneously a "distinctive race" and mentally "abnormal", in comparison to the universal norm of the European man. (2008, p. 2).

[360] 2014.

> boys would not stop playing […] The Atlantic was going to join the match,
> and come in to the hotel afterwards[361].

Coming back to our interest in walking as akin to trance and accessing the unconscious, part VI emphasises how "uncertain" this process is[362]. Again, we can contrast the fluency of the flâneuse's movement through *Paris* with Capildeo's walker, the jeopardy she perceives with each step. So, even if there were a pre-colonial memory to recover, even with the legacy of colonial trauma embedded in recent memory-images, to access the buried memory of intergenerational trauma is neither safe nor is it, necessarily, the way to heal, but to sea and to oblivion.

Through the six parts of the poem, we have seen the speaker challenge the assumptions and universalisms of the Western dominant discourse. The frameworks of England, empire, identity and psychology, those that informed Freud, and that are, arguably, still entrenched in the English language and culture, break down at every point. We can identify how contemporary trauma theory founded on Eurocentric, patriarchal assumptions is of limited use to our speaker. But the hybridity that we have seen in the poem suggests that this is not a straightforward rejection of Western ideas, and elsewhere in the book, we see Capildeo's speaker(s) directly acknowledging the complexity of Indo-Trinidadian heritage. In "Too Solid Flesh":

> gracious in mud or on tiles in that territory where a dream of the village
> East washes through into somewhere western, momentarily eroding the
> reality of both, sometimes leaving permanent alterations in its wake;
> somewhere like Trinidad, so Indian even if not considered so, so Western
> even if not called so, thumbnail of the Americas, immigrant blood opal at
> its base[363].

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[361] 2016, pp. 65-66.

[362] "what should the feet expect? blown sand over paved path, or deep sand? mud or quicksand? broken bottle or quartz?" (2016, p. 65).

[363] 2016, pp. 22-23.

The poem does not limit this sense of complexity to Trinidad. The landscape of Oxford is, similarly, hybrid: "*Apple cores and pear seeds and walnut kernels matured into a wilderness too hybridized for names*"[364], suggesting that these "permanent alterations" are not located elsewhere but are pervasive. (Though the latter passage sounds bucolic and typically English, the named species are all ancient and native across the borders of East/West.) European signposts permeate the speaker's cultural perspective, such as in her reference to Pointillism[365], alongside references to Hinduism: "Our storybooks were English and children in them ran around thousand-year-old castles […] our myths were Hindu […] and our island geography, we were told, had been Arawak and Carib"[366]. Whereas Fanon would describe the Antillean as identifying with the collective unconscious of the white European because of their cultural upbringing and education[367], Capildeo's speaker recognises an intersection between the coloniser and the colonized (both in an Indian heritage and indigenous landscape). As in "Book of Dreams", there is no stable privileging or critical standpoint of one culture over another because East and West are experienced as inextricable. This sounds much like Fanon's assertion that there is no black culture, no white culture. Not that there is equality, but that there are constructs and there is contingency: "The Negro is not. Any more than the white man. Both must turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible"[368]. Although Fanon states that there is nothing of the past remaining inside him, that he is not the slave of slavery, this contingency that he says we are born into seems to prefigure the intergenerational trauma that we

[364] 2016, p. 20.
[365] "these dots would obediently dance apart, disperse, making image into worse than nonsense" (2016, p. 23).

[366] 2016, p. 21.
[367] 1968, p. 188.

[368] 1968, p. 231.

have been considering. Fanon's position is not that there is no intergenerational trauma[369], only that disalienation, the recapturing of the self, and the shift away from the question of superiority/inferiority, is how we move on, to "create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world [where my freedom is given to me] in order to build the world of *You*"[370]. The recapturing of the self is not in order to create the individual. Freedom is a means towards interaction, which brings us back to the concept of inextricability, and the double-telling. Though Caruth's concept of recognition focuses on the generation of narrative, along psychoanalytical lines, we can see how the inextricability, or double-telling, Capildeo (and Fanon) describes might be seen as almost holophrastic, congregational, in Harrison's terms[371]. This inextricability offers an alternative to Bergson's reliance on individualised memory-images, with the potential for a form of collective memory embedded in embodied/pre-narrative experiences: not as a turning away from the West or towards Orientalist yearnings for ancient origins, but in recognition of those "permanent alterations", that make some effort towards disalienation and that are irreversible and pervasive.

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[369] Fanon states that "unless we make use of that frightening postulate […] the *collective unconscious*, we can understand absolutely nothing." (1968, pp. 144-145). He argues that the illustrated children's magazines telling "Tarzan stories", as a "release for collective aggression" (p. 146), invites the Antillean to identify with the white hero against the evil "savage [which is] always symbolized by Negroes or Indians". While "the Antillean conducts himself like a white man […] he is a Negro. That he will learn once he goes to Europe" (p.148). And so the colonial trauma that created the need for the collective release is both entrenched and perpetuated by cultural media.

[370] 1968, pp. 231-232.

[371] "language tells us what we already learnt from ritual, that the 'soul' of primitive man is 'congregationalized'" (2010, p. 475).

In "To Stand Before", the poem opens with a silence that is not "*thinking too much*. Thought has nothing to do with it", but occurs in the "moment of encounter", or more precisely, in the space that opens up between the two participants at "the moment of encounter-about-to-become event"[372]: it is "an almost immeasurably small but acutely perceptible interval", but it is also an "abyss". We might imagine this interval as the pause between perception and action, the moment Bergson would fill with memory-images. And we do have memory-images, here, the speaker in the doorway encountering strangers who see her as either a "foreign child"[373] or a "beggar"[374]. These memories, that are micro-aggressions, are past traumatic events that interpenetrate the present and fill the space of the "about-to-become", where the speaker perceives herself reduced by the other's gaze, objectified, in a way that Mirrlees's flâneuse does not experience. She is the observer, but Capildeo's speaker is the observed, and/or identifies with the one being observed: by a woman whose eyes fill "entirely with black", or a man "bringing in judgement on the human soul before him"[375]. Mirrlees was able to use her speaker's memory-images to generate the potential recognition of the trace of the other, but the speaker, here, is that trace. Her encounters seem to chime with the binaries of England/not-England that create new context for old colonial patterns and leave this figure isolated by the outsider status assigned to her in these encounters[376]. How

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[372] 2016, p. 16.

[373] "Here in my adult life I have stood outside a community doorway, a decade ago, having knocked and about to exit, dressed in martial arts white, and been asked by a woman very little my senior with a voice of blankets, *Who do you belong to?*, for she saw a foreign child" (p. 16).

[374] "I have sat within a commercial doorway, in the decade previous, ensconced with my shopping bags […] wearing purple silk and expecting my mother's arrival, and been told by a bob-haired woman with a voice of posters, *I'm sorry, I haven't got anything*" (pp. 16-17).

[375] 2016, p. 17.

[376] Frederick C. Staidum Jr describes new contexts for slavery created in Harriet Jacobs's writing, using Bergson's framework combined with Amiri Baraka's "changing same": "Jacobs […] offers a

would these previous experiences inform her perception of the present "about-to-become"; how is she to act, given the antagonism of what's gone before? To withdraw from the encounter or to return the antagonism, in resistance to being objectified? When the narrator resisted the group's identification of her with V. S. Naipaul, in "Book of Dreams", the poem touched on, and resists, Freud's idea of a collective trauma underpinning a national/cultural identity[377]. Although I have suggested that there is a collective, intergeneration trauma in Capildeo, I have also argued that the writing critiques such notions of stability. Roger Luckhurst suggests that, although trauma can create shared identity, this recognition is likely "volatile", and can perpetuate the violence it endured[378]. The memory-images in "To Stand Before" seem to demonstrate this potential. How the perpetuation of binaries that exclude belonging leave the speaker entrenched in the violence of that dynamic.

The memory-proper, in this poem, seems to articulate the problematic dynamic of past encounters, which is the dynamic that underpins Fanon's position. He is in search of the "universality inherent in the human condition"[379], which extracts us from the constructs dividing and defining black/white culture. These constructs are embedded in the language we use and the way we use it, but I would argue that it is the silence in "To Stand Before", used as a deliberate holding of that space between

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useful specimen of how ex-slave temporalities operate as *durée* and how the interpenetration of past, present, and future accentuates a changing same context. The new conditions within which Jacobs finds herself embroiled in the US North encourage her to draw parallels, albeit metamorphosed between the illiteracy of her past bondage and the irregular writing of the present narrative" (2022, p. 41).

[377] In *Moses and Monotheism* first published in 1939.

[378] 2008, p. 213.

[379] 1968, p. 12.

perception/action, that generates the potential for a third way, and breaks away from the undercurrent of binaries[380]. It is a silence grounded in the environment. In the moment before the "(long scratch of glass on glass, mutual crystal transfer)", "a world opens within me":

> Another sky, washing out and out, filled with birds creating and obeying a summons, an arc: the percussive seagull crying an ocean somewhere; the golden hardwood doors of eagle wings slamming a warning to walkers […]: caught up in the sense of habitual, never accustomed flight (yours, mine) I am silent before you (everything)[381].

The habitual flight that the speaker is caught up in within the silence suggests habit-memory, in Bergson's terms, but it is not the automatic movements of the speaker learnt through repetition, "never accustomed", but a natural impulse, whether bird or human "(yours, mine)". And so, the silence is not in opposition to Bergson's duration. It is not an absence of sound or memory, or a failure to respond. It is a ritual imbued with the noise and instincts of birds, an experiential/qualitative, preverbal approach. We might think of the birdcall as semiotic, and the interval, the "abyss", as choral, suggesting that we are dealing with bodily drives and impulses. Such shared human impulses link the speaker with the one she may encounter, with "whomsoever-it-must-be-and-you-alone"[382], a composite phrase that sounds remarkably holophrastic, and sinks subject and object below the linguistic threshold of identity/selfhood. Harrison's theorisation of art and ritual as deriving from the same human impulses as primitive religious practice, places rituals, such as silence, meditation, even the clinking of glasses (the "long scratch of glass on glass"), as intergenerational survivals, akin to collective memories, that seem to me a viable alternative to Bergson's memory-proper, as a means towards free will. Although she was influenced by both

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[380] In relation to Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love,* Craps argues that silence is not "merely a symptom of trauma, to be dispelled without a second thought, silence is also a coping mechanism, a conscious choice deserving of respect" (2014, p. 55).

[381] 2016, p. 16.

[382] 2016, p. 16.

Freud and Bergson, what we see on Harrison's bridge between religion and art is more in keeping with Bergson's embrace of the "emotional and experiential"[383], as well as his rejection of the quantitative[384]. As opposed to the hostility of the memory-proper, the silence, the flight of birds, reimagines the encounter as a ritualistic pause, a collective experience, or double-telling, grounded in shared human impulse.

Thinking back to part I of "Book of Dreams", and the potential for idiom to divide the women along cultural lines, here the silence undercuts that division, avoiding the potential "inferiority complex" that, Fanon argues, results from coming face-to-face with "the language of the civilizing nation[385]. Part I was an encounter akin to the misrecognition of Capildeo's speaker as foreign child, which is a reiteration of the encounter that saw her misrecognised as a beggar. Silence, in comparison, is a holophrastic gesture, but rather than the political strategy we saw in *Paris*, which forced the white, European reader to recognise the trace of the other, here, it is a rupture that underpins a recognition

[383] Martha Carpentier uses this description in relation to Jane Harrison: "She rebelled against the rationalism that dominated the thinking of her contemporaries, and for her alone among the scholars of her generation primitivism became not only a valid, but a superior way of life because it was not rational, but emotional and experiential" (1994, p.11).

[384] Harrison's theory shuns the hierarchical assumptions of Freud, as well as her contemporaries, to identify an equality between primitivism and all art, as opposed to only the lowbrow: "As intrigued as [James Frazer} was with primitive ritual, he was no more willing than any of his predecessors or colleagues to admit 'civilised' modern European man's deep psychological kinship with the 'savage.' […] But for Jane Harrison there was no hierarchy separating modern from primitive based upon a superior rationality" (Carpentier, 1994, p. 15).

[385] "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (1968, p. 18).

of the hybridity of human reality. In the same way that Fanon is not the slave of his ancestral history, Capildeo's poem cannot be reduced to being *about* racism. There is, within these poems, the qualitative experience of racism, and the ongoing reiterations of the violence and trauma of colonialism in the present. But there is also, in the poems' expression of time as duration, the potential future, and it is only ever potential, where self/other, England/not-England, Paris/Paris, are not in opposition, not alienated by the contingencies of the past, but are a double-telling, altered and inextricable.

The European collective memories expressed in *Paris* could be seen to both contain the non-European other and fail to recognise that other, while the implications of reading Capildeo's characters as displaying symptoms of functional neurological disorder suggest that the intergenerational trauma within their unconscious is also unrecognised. In FND, we might think of the brain as trying to protect the subject from something too painful to deal with consciously. And so, if the European unconscious, too, feels our culpability in global war and imperial violence is too distressing for us to bear, we might learn from neuroscience that without some form of acknowledgement, we are at risk of repeating ourselves. In both Mirrlees and Capildeo, we can recognise how Bergson's expression of experiential time provides a mechanism for unpicking the palimpsest of past and present, both in a post-traumatic landscape of metropolitan Paris, and as the ongoing lived experience of the displaced postcolonial figure of a Caribbean ex-colony. The black unconscious requires some adaptation of Bergson's *Durée.* For Capildeo's characters, where memory-proper is not accessed/accessible, ritual becomes an intergenerational survivor, an alternative form of memory akin to the Fanonian collective unconscious. In the next chapter, we will look at how imperial power is exerted by exploiting the unconscious of the colonial subject, and how the socialisation of the other, over the course of centuries, becomes embedded in the perspectives of both metropole and colony. We will build on the configuration of ritual as an

intergenerational survivor to consider how this might challenge the dominant discourse from within its own parameters.

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Chapter Three: Ritual and the Socialisation of the Colonial Subject

Pocomania (2017), written in 1938 and set in Jamaica, is Una Marson's third play. It is the dramatisation of how a middle-class Jamaican woman experiences her life and the intergenerational trauma that underlies that experience. The text articulates a clear dichotomy that creates tension between the protagonist, Stella Manners, and her family. This split centres around colonial standards of respectability and is primarily expressed through religious practice. I will begin with a close reading of the opening scenes of the play, thinking about how the dialogue maps these tensions in relation to Frantz Fanon's conception of phobogenesis and the socialisation of the colonial subject, alongside Julia Kristeva's ideas around the semiotic and the stranger. I will explore the roles the characters take on and how the colonial context may work to construct their identities and influence their behaviours. And using the thoughts of the negritude movement (particularly Fanon and Léopold Senghor), Garveyism and other contemporary perceptions, I will explore the socio-political and cultural implications of Marson's play, whether it might be read as an expression of double-consciousness or subject to it, or whether there is a third way. The drumming and performance of Pocomania ceremonies offer an opportunity to search for possible underlying meaning(s) in the undersong of the play through a semiotic approach to ritual. I will use Zora Neale Hurston's research into Pocomania, also published in 1938, to expand our insight into that religious practice, which the play holds the potential to perform on the stage but does not necessarily point to in the text. In the end, what we will see is how Marson's play demonstrates the complexities that produce and perpetuate the colonial subject. That there is no solution offered by the play strengthens this sense of complexity, that the deeply entrenched colonial structures, grounded in the binaries of metropole/colony, West/Global South, persist. Reading (and performing) *Pocomania* almost a century later may not show us how far we have come, but how challenging decolonisation continues to be.

Pocomania

The prologue opens and ends with the sound of the drums: "*Before curtain rises, steady and weird beat of Pocomania drums* […] *Drums beating, beating, beating, but quite softly*"[386]. It is the drumming that wakes Stella and informs the conversation between her, her sister, Dawn, her step-brothers, John and David, and their nurse. Stella is fascinated by the drums, while Dawn takes the position of her father, a deacon, which is that the drums are "awful" and that dancing to them is "a sin"[387]. Merely listening to the drums is fraught with danger, in Dawn's mind, as she warns Stella that she will catch a cold if she stands at the window too long. There is symmetry and binary, here, the two sisters and the two brothers, the division between Dawn and Stella, their opposing position between orthodox and revivalist religion, the one who fears the law and the one drawn to breaking it. There are clear implications from a colonial perspective. The intrusion of the drums into Deacon Manners's home disrupts the family's sense of colonial respectability and Christian values with the expression of pre-colonial ritual embedded in Pocomania. Pocomania evolved out of the colonial imperative that the enslaved give up their own religions and the capacity of the enslaved to incorporate their own practices within this new environment, and as the play progresses, this tension becomes more pronounced. It might be mapped against metropole/colony, with the characters aligning and defining themselves along this split. As the scene directions describe the drumming as "weird", we could conclude that the play's value system privileges Deacon Manners's colonial identity. However, I want to explore the possibility that this weirdness does not connote absurdity but otherness. And that it is this otherness that Stella is facing within herself and that compels her to dance.

[386] 2017, pp. 4, 10.

[387] 2017, pp. 5, 7.

The disruptive force of the drumming entering the deacon's home can be figured as semiotic, the rhythm interrupting the symbolic and closed-off system of Christian orthodoxy. The preverbal is here linked with the African religious heritage embedded within Pocomania. This is explicit later in the dialogue ("Who taught [Josiah] to beat it like that? […] Him puppa, dat is Josiah granfader, come here a little boy pon slave ship from Africa"[388]), but in Kristevan terms, the drumming does not correspond simply to a pre-colonial before. It is the language of desire, the unconscious erupting into the present moment. We have seen that the sisters are at opposite ends of a spectrum in their response to it. Stella is moved to dance. She is drawn to Sister Kate and the yard where she holds the revivalist meetings, while Dawn is determined to suppress this desire. She is grounded in the symbolic world of the metaphorical law and her literal father. When Deacon Manners goes with Parson Craig to ask Sister Kate to stop the Pocomania meetings, they are the authority, able to eject the sister from their church, if she does not agree with their position that her meetings are sinful: "I don't think it is right, that shouting and jumping all through the night"[389]. It is not that she is praising the wrong god, but the desire her ceremonies express threatens the men. When she and the local population perform the Pocomania rituals within their Christian worship, they are questioning the primacy of Christianity, their relationship to, and respect of, the Christian West through the expression of an ancestral African heritage. It is a preverbal eruption literalised through the drumming, which denotes the resurfacing of that heritage repressed by the Western socialisation of a colonised people.

Frantz Fanon describes this process of socialisation, how in colonial countries the cultural material "devoured by the local children" was the same material read by the children of the metropole. These

[388] 2017, p. 33.

[389] 2017, p. 15.

stories, he says, are put together by "white men for little white men" as a kind of catharsis for collective "aggression". The white heroes become "explorers":

> while the "Savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians [and] since there is always identification with the victor, the little Negro, quite as easily as the little white boy, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, a missionary 'who faces the danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes'[390].

The "little Negro", then, perceives himself as white, while the "Savage […] symbolized by Negroes", he responds to as a "phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety"[391]. The "savage" for the colonial child, as much as for the "little white men", is the foreigner. Though Fanon asserts that for the European, the other is black, his discussion on phobogenesis demonstrates how Kristeva's theory of strangerness is not only pertinent to white selfhood but to the colonised self that thinks of himself as European: "the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder"[392]. Kristeva asserts that in recognising the stranger within ourselves, we learn to appreciate the other rather than fear them. Deacon and Parson clearly fear the revivalists, which they verbalise in terms of the impact those ceremonies' popularity has on the size of their own congregation. But the fear is more than the fear of failure. The revivalist is the "savage", and as such, is abject. They construct Sister Kate's meetings and Pocomania in terms of morality in the same way that Sara Ahmed asserts that Aboriginality is constructed as criminality[393]. Building on Erving Goffman's concept of

[390] 2017, p. 123.

[391] 2017, p. 128.

[392] 1991, p. 1.

[393] 2000, p. 129.

"conversion"[394], Ahmed describes how the prisoner feels the panoptic gaze of the prison guard as though it were constant, and we might consider how Deacon Manners, as a middle-class, colonial subject socialised by the socio-cultural systems of the West, performs the values of those systems, as though under the gaze of the colonial ruler. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin discuss surveillance, and the panopticon as a metaphor for "the 'disciplinary' operation of dominant discourse of all kinds":

> Whereas imperial power over the colonized subject may not be necessarily as direct and physical as it is in a 'total 'institution, power over the subject may be exerted in myriad ways, enforced by the threat of subtle kinds of cultural and moral disapproval and exclusion[395].

They describe how this threat of exclusion may lead to the colonial subject accepting and internalising the cultural values of the imperial power and voluntarily changing their behaviour to meet those expectations. We can see that the deacon has internalised the values of Christianity, the "imperial view", the "array of values, assumptions and cultural expectations"[396]. But he is not only policing himself, he is not only the prisoner, but has also internalised the gaze of the guard. If we follow Ahmed's thoughts, as she goes on to consider monitorial schools, the gaze that has been focused on guarding the self is then turned outwards: "The monitorial gaze is *other-directed* more

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[394] Goffman: "the convert takes a more disciplined, moralistic, monochromatic line, presenting himself as someone whose institutional enthusiasm is always at the disposal of the staff" (2007, p. 63).

[395] Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013, p. 254. In the same passage, they go on to say: "This will produce colonial subjects who are 'more English than the English', those whom V.S. Naipaul called 'The Mimic Men' in the novel of that same name." And that this "conversion will be ambivalent […] leading to what Homi Bhabha calls 'mimicry'". A concept that we will come to later in the chapter.

[396] From the same passage as previous footnote.

than *self-directed* […] The monitor becomes a method: *it is by policing others that you police yourself*."[397] When the deacon and parson admonish the behaviour of the revivalists, they take on this monitorial gaze. They constitute Sister Kate's congregation in terms of sin, in opposition to the colonial construct of religious piety that defines their own identity. Sister Kate is the colonial subject, while Deacon Manners and Parson Craig are policing themselves by taking on the role of the proxy-colonial master. The deacon and the parson cannot face the stranger within because that stranger is constructed as quasi-criminal. Rather, they eject Sister Kate from their church. Her strangerness/otherness is abject precisely because it threatens to recover the otherness within their own unconscious, a recovery that would destabilise the foundations of their colonial identity.

The defensive language adopted by Deacon Manners and the parson echoes the wider arguments supporting colonialism as a system of rule. By this, I mean the assumptions made by the European establishment about people from Africa that underpinned the white man's ethical right to govern. As Mrinalini Greedharry summarises:

> Colonial psychiatry in Africa concluded that Africans did not have the complex inner life that the European had […] Since Africans were infantile and uncontrolled, unable to function as rational and productive citizens, they required the supervision and management Europeans could offer[398].

When the religious men sit opposite Sister Kate, they portray themselves as rational figures and assume authority. They tell the sister that they have been having a "very serious talk", that they are "displeased" and that she has put them "in a very difficult position"[399]. They are paternal in their tone. Similarly, when the deacon and Dawn discuss the potential return of a "Revivalist gang", Dawn worries about the effect the drums will have on Stella, but her father says, "I am sure she has

[397] 2019, pp. 122-123.

[398] 2008, pp. 18-19.

[399] 2017, p. 14.

outgrown all that nonsense"[400]. Stella has not "outgrown" Pocomania, and when David, too, infantilises her, believing Pocomania to be dangerous and Stella to be vulnerable, he sets himself up in the role of saviour: "Yes, and she is at an emotional crisis where only calm reasoning can help her. I am afraid of her going headlong into this, for she may become unbalanced […] But whatever happens we have got to save her from herself"[401]. This perception of Pocomania as childish, and of the need to rescue Stella from herself, is an echo of the European argument for colonialism. It expresses the same attitude to African heritage as Freud asserts in his discussion on primitivism, that the "savage" is a contemporary link to an earlier stage in the European development[402]. Pocomania is "base" and "erotic" in David's view. It "appeals to the emotions", to a local population unlike "the Nordics with hundreds of years of discipline, restraint and orthodox religion behind them". He says, "Our people are made of sun and fire"[403]. In opposition to the rationality of Deacon Manners, with his Christian values and mature stage of development, the lower-class Jamaican population are immature and emotional. In this dynamic, adulthood equals whitehood.

Deacon Manners and Parson Craig's attitude towards Pocomania might be thought of as a coping strategy in response to "double-consciousness", a phrase coined by W. E. B. Du Bois to describe "*the psychological condition* […] *where blacks incessantly and uncritically engage and judge their*

[400] 2017, p. 25-26.

[401] 2017, p. 44.

[402] 2020, p. 4.

[403] 2017, p. 43. The comparison between the Jamaican people as the sun and the cool reason of the Nordics aligns with the perception of East/West we saw in Chapter One with H.D.'s moment of "jeopardy" in "People of Sparta", where she asks, "shall the West prevail?" (2019, pp. 48-49). While David is simultaneously empathising with, and infantilising the Jamaican population, he may also be understood as signalling the danger posed by decolonisation and Jamaican independence.

life-worlds and life-struggles exclusively utilizing the white world's anti-black racist culture and conceptions of civilization [internalising] *the diabolical dialectic of white superiority and black inferiority*"[404]. Leopold Senghor, who Reiland Rabaka asserts would have been, at least, indirectly influenced by Du Boisian thought[405], is primarily concerned with identifying and establishing a black consciousness, as distinct from the dominant white discourse. Chike Jeffers describes Senghorian negritude as an articulation of values against the imperial project[406], and that's exactly what Rabaka suggests it is: "Senghorian Negritude is at once a rebellious (albeit, not by any means *revolutionary*) affirmation of *Africanité* in the face of the politics of assimilation and post-war French imperialism"[407]. Senghor's cultural nationalism, Jeffers suggests, demarcates a distinctiveness of black people, rooted in a collective African heritage that should be a source of pride and liberation, an "emancipatory tool [that is] the main theme of the anti-colonial side of Senghor's thought"[408]. Deacon and Parson are rooted not in their African heritage but in the Western orthodoxy of Christianity. They measure themselves, their worth, in terms of white supremacy, while Senghor would challenge them to search out and embrace an African identity. But where Senghor and these characters agree is in their definitions of what is European/African. Senghor defines black against white by allowing the white man his rational thought and suggesting that the black man is ruled by emotions. The middle-class characters of Marson's play also express this attitude, so we come to the central ambiguity of the play. How do we position the play in terms

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[404] Rabaka, 2015, p. 9.

[405] "Many of the concepts of racial lived-experience that Du Bois articulated in *The Souls of Black Folk* are intellectually interconnected and endlessly intersect, [offering] several of his most enduring contributions to […] the sociology of race and the genesis of Negritude" (2015, p. 13).

[406] 2009, pp. 54-64.

[407] 2015, p. 200.

[408] 2009, p. 55.

of its socio-political and aesthetic implications? Rabaka argues that it is a symptom of how deeply entrenched the dominant discourse of black primitivism and white superiority was for Senghor that his thought seeks to reclaim black identity by absorbing the very traits Europe had already attributed to Africa and Africans: "intuitive reason, emotional, sensational, sensuousness, instinctual, feeling, rhythm, creative, imaginative, natural, agricultural, primitive, athletic, animalistic, hyper-sexual, spiritual, exotic, and erotic"[409]. Marson's characters are entrenched in this same discourse of white supremacy. The difference is that they uphold Eurocentric assumptions about the value of these traits, while Senghor inverts them to suggest the ethical superiority of African reasoning: which "seeks community and mutual enrichment"[410], rather than its European counterpart that exploits resources for capitalist gain[411]. Deacon Manners and Parson Craig are an expression of double-consciousness, coping with a colonial socio-political construct that positions them in a complex Manichean duality. By defining their worth in relation to European ideals, they marginalise Africa/Africans. The question remains about what the play is doing when it offers us this representation of middle-class Jamaica.

Although Deacon Manners represents Eurocentric assumptions, Marson's dialogue dramatises the Senghorian inversion of those values. If we think about Senghor's essentialising of the African as

[409] 2015, p. 210.

[410] Jeffers, 2009, p. 63.

[411] "Senghor claims that 'in propagating, in Africa, its rationalist civilisation […] Europe disorganized Negro African society more than any other by drying up the very sources of civilization'" (Jeffers, 2009, p. 62).

aligned with nature and the soil[412], in relation to the conversation between Sister Kate, Deacon Manners and the parson, we see that Pocomania is characterised through the singing stones. Sister Kate states that the stones would sing out, if the people were to stop, and so there is the implication that Pocomania and the people are aligned with the landscape. But if Pocomania is organic, when Parson Craig appears to agree – when he replies that it would be "a good thing if they give the stones a chance once in a while"[413] – he has inadvertently set himself and his colonial identity up in opposition to this natural order. On the one hand, the perpetuation of a Europe/Africa dualism expresses the double-consciousness of the characters, but it also undermines Senghorian negritude as an anti-racist, anti-colonial strategy. As Rabaka argues, merely inverting the value of Eurocentric stereotypes simply re-inscribes the same racist tropes negritude might hope to displace[414]. And yet, the effect of dramatising such an inversion through Marson's dialogue both articulates the reality of this dualism within colonial class systems, and it seems to turn the dominant discourse against itself. Perhaps, then, the play does not completely break out of its double-consciousness here, because it perpetuates the duality of Africa/Europe, as with Senghor. But Marson seems to have brought off a political turn in the rhetoric, to assert that colonialism is unnatural. Given the challenge of navigating away from the reality of an overbearing white discourse, and the play's commitment to a realistic representation of middle-class colonial life, it is possible to see the

[412] "The African has an intense ontological affinity with nature that is apparently absent from European humanity. According to Senghor, the 'Negro is the man of Nature. […] By tradition he [the African] lives off the soil and with the soil.'" (Rabaka, 2015, p. 207).

[413] 2017, p. 16.

[414] "By unwittingly utilizing Europe as the model of and measure for humanity, Senghor (re)inferiorizes Africa and Africans, making them Europe's ideal Others, and leaving Europe […] *at the center* of all human history, culture, and civilization" (2015, p. 210).

potential of using the dominant discourse within this dramatic form to at least begin to unsettle those that dominate.

Fanon, quoting from an article in *The African Today*, describes how it is the most educated "negroes" that struggle with double-consciousness the most, "the wearing of European clothes"[415] and changing their accent to perform whiteness. On the page, it is apparent that only Sister Kate and her followers at the yard have a local accent, with the Manners family written in standard English, a division that would be even more striking in performance. Sister Kate constitutes the gap between herself and Stella in terms of class, of respectability:

> I don't care what de people wid larning say, dere will always be de common people and de better class people. I know I like to stay in de common set, for den I can express meself widouten notting happen[416].

Sister Kate holds that the two sets are equal in God's eyes, but that you cannot belong to both, that Stella cannot understand the Pocomania meetings because she is respectable. There is an intersection of racial and class division, even as Stella and Sister Kate are racially aligned, because of the colonial socialisation that Fanon describes. The connotation of the family name, "Manners", is to suppress strong emotions and behave in line with societal expectations, and Sister Kate suggests that the consequence of that is to be unable to express oneself safely, which captures Fanon's assertion that it is the most educated, the middle-class, that are most driven to perform a colonial identity.

This socialisation has specific significance for women and black womanhood. Zora Neale Hurston's research in Jamaica suggests that Sister Kate's position is marginalised by "the aim of everybody to talk English, act English and *look* English." The "frantic stampede white-ward to escape from

[415] 2017, p. 15.

[416] 2017, p. 37.

Jamaica's black mass"[417], and the mullato/a, she figures in terms of the absorption of the black population by the white. This is, for Neale Hurston, a specifically colonial approach[418] and in opposition to "the strategy of the American Negro [who attempts] to achieve a position equal to the white population in every way but each race to maintain its separate identity"[419]. Without suggesting that this was not the case, it is complicated by Cherene Sherrard-Johnson's writing, which describes the depiction of black women by writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance as a "war of images"[420], where a "fascination with the mulatta figure, specifically, reinvents her as an icon of Afro-modernism"[421]. The image could depict the caricature of the promiscuous black woman, but was also reconstructed by African-American literature against the erotic, immoral, subhuman stereotypes: "The depiction of women as mixed-race madonnas, teachers, or socialites in

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[417] 2009, p. 6.

[418] Neale Hurston's research seems to take on an almost Orientalist gaze at times. She describes the rituals as "barbaric" (2009, p. 4), mimicking the association of the savage with the other, but she also gives a sense of uplift to the African-American, in relation to the African-Caribbean, both through an essentialising of the Jamaican "negro" and in terms of the slavery in Jamaica's past, as though America (and elsewhere) does not also hold the legacy of slavery: "But one must remember that Jamaica has slavery in her past and it takes many generations for the slave derivatives to get over their awe for the master-kind. Then there is the colonial attitude. Add to that the negro's natural aptitude for imitation and you have Jamaica" (2009, p. 6). In the same essay, it is an "Englishwoman" that Neale Hurston credits with turning the Jamaican back towards their self and "capturing Jamaican form": "Her work has strength of conception and a delicate skill [and] is wasted on Kingston for the most part" (p. 10).

[419] 2009, p. 7.

[420] 2007, p. xviii.

[421] 2007, p. 13.

New Negro periodicals enforced a sexist standard of behavior and vocation denoted by a colorist conception of beauty and femininity"[422]. The mulatta figure, then, is part of a (double) consciousness that crosses the African-Caribbean/African-American literary and political landscape, perhaps via Afro-modernism. The stage directions of *Pocomania* do not comment on the appearance of Stella and Dawn, except that Dawn is plain, but the choices around casting could underscore or undercut the association between skin tone and Christian morality, the respectability highlighted by Sister Kate, depending on the appearance and performance of the women playing these roles. The sisters' behaviour and deportment, their accent and social class, the expectations of them from those around them, are suggestive of this literary trope, although Dawn suggests that Stella has "modern ideas"[423], and Stella is more equivocal about marriage. Nevertheless, they do both expect to marry. Dawn will be a parson's wife, and Stella would have returned to the city, where she had received her education, to be a barrister's wife, had John lived. She says, "I am frightened to think how happy we shall be"[424]. Their lifestyles and attitudes might be contrasted with Neale Hurston's experience of a Jamaican wedding: "many couples live together as husband and wife for a generation and then marry […] they go on raising their children on the understanding that if and when they can afford it they will have the wedding"[425]. The Manners sisters' attitude demarcates their higher social class and demonstrates Victorian standards, which Sherrard-Johnson states created an "ambiguous symbol of racial uplift that ironically constrained African American womanhood"[426], but are also in line with Ula Taylor's description of middle-class Jamaica. With

[422] Sherrard-Johnson, 2007, pp. xvi-xvii.

[423] "I admit [Parson Craig] does not admire ultra modern ideas and you have been rather on the fast side" (2017, p. 22).

[424] 2017, p. 23.

[425] 2009, pp. 14-15.

[426] 2007, p. xx.

regard to Amy Jacques Garvey's Jamaican upbringing[427], Taylor describes how Jamaican society judged women for their abilities as "helpmates and mothers"[428]. She goes on to illustrate this attitude in Jacques Garvey's own writings about gender roles, where she describes women as being "particularly suited to be nurturers […] despite the fact that this role set a restrictive standard for appropriate behavior"[429]. She reimagined the power of the helpmate role as being an influencer, rather than subordinate, in relation to the man. Dawn is clearly cast as a nurturer/helper figure. She's the one that takes charge in the prologue when Stella collapses, telling the boys to fetch help. And when Stella finds her mending lace for the parson's communion cloth, she implies that Dawn is often performing such tasks: "Hello, Dawn, being industrious as usual?". While Dawn expresses contentment in this role, Stella is "bored to tears" by her father's suggestion she "keep busy helping the people in the district"[430]. Neale Hurston's research reminds us of the class-specific nature of these attitudes. She describes how the lower-class black woman was treated as little more than a "donkey [loading] banana boats"[431], with no rights or hope for better, in contrast to the mulatta, who could dream of marrying well[432]. Little hope of influencing anyone for this black woman, then. And

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[427] "Essentially, well-to-do Jamaicans attempted to replicate Victorian families, which were presumed to be 'superior', by creating households that were patriarchal and nuclear" (2002, p. 13).

[428] 2002, p. 14.

[429] 2002, p. 75.

[430] 2017, pp. 22, 24.

[431] 2009, p. 58.

[432] Again, Neale Hurston is quite clear in her portrayal of Jamaica as being in opposition to America, where she asserts that all women are treated as having god-given rights: "The majority of men in all the states are pretty much agreed that just for being born a girl-baby you ought to have laws and privileges and pay" (2009, p. 57). Though she takes this position when setting the US in relation to Jamaica, this is not how Janie Crawford, in *Their Eyes were Watching God*, published a

yet, even with the privileges she has, it is difficult to see how Dawn's helper role in relation to Parson Craig offers her any power. If it creates space for her voice to be heard within the patriarchy, she does not seem to use that space. Having imitated her father's voice in the nursery, she has now betrothed herself to a man in his image, another man of the cloth in alignment with Deacon Manners's values and opinions. She is now aligned with the parson, even sharing one of her few lines of dialogue with him[433]. Stella is not in opposition to Dawn, as they both hold Victorian ideals around marriage. But she is not cast in the helper role. She might be a socialite, going back to the New Negro concept of the mulatta, with her yearning for city life. And she broadly obeys the rules of Victorian femininity, asking David's help, his permission, to go to Sister Kate's nine night. Even when she sneaks away to attend the Pocomania meetings, the very act of hiding her behaviour from her family suggests her participation in this societal framework. Not the double consciousness of the black man, but in Nahum Welang's terminology, Stella and Dawn experience the triple consciousness of being marginalised by both their racial and gender identities[434]. Both sisters are constrained, albeit in their own ways, by the Western values the middle-classes have been socialised to see as superior.

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year before her Jamaican research (1937), experiences life as a woman in America, a novel that also acknowledges the legacy of slavery in the US.

[433] When David is worried about Stella: "Don't keep us in suspense, what is it", they say simultaneously (2017, p. 55).

[434] Welang says that within the framework of double consciousness, and its advocating "for better living conditions for black women, the text is careful to prominently extol the values of the doting black mother, a woman very much under the gaze and control of the black husband's idealised authority" (2018, pp. 297-298). This chimes with the black nationalism Marcus Garvey practised.

Perhaps Stella does have some influence on David. As a child he already seemed aligned with her. When Dawn tells them in the nursery that the ritual dancing is a sin, David disagrees with her. He says, "It is not a sin! Dance for us Stella"[435]. As a child he talks about his mother, that she would explain the drumming to them, if she were present, but as an adult, he expresses the Victorian European/Christian attitudes of his step-father, Deacon Manners. And yet, he still has some sympathy for Stella's interest in Pocomania. Dawn says: "You seem to be going over to her side yourself"[436]. He describes Pocomania's appeal to Parson Craig: "It isn't strange. It appeals to the emotions"[437], and suggests that it is what "our people" need. That he says Pocomania "isn't strange" and uses the term "our people" suggests that David acknowledges some identification with the revivalists, even as he is aligned with the parson in opposition to them. This ambiguity is unlike the positions represented by Stella and Dawn, who occupied opposite ends of an Apollonian/Dionysian spectrum in their response to the drumming in the opening scene. David is without his binary, since his brother's death. His recognition of the stranger within ("it isn't strange") suggests the potential for a third way, one that navigates between Dawn and Stella, but this is severely limited by his treatment of Stella after she faints at a revivalist ceremony. He carries her into the house, fulfilling his role as saviour, and, six months later, is still giving her "medicine", which she swallows[438].

That Stella is treated as an invalid and claims, herself, to have been "a silly hysterical girl [that has now] grown up"[439], seems to confirm Dawn's first impulse, that the drumming was fraught with physical danger, and to justify her family's infantilising attitude towards her. David, again, rescues

[435] 2017, p. 7.

[436] 2017, p. 56.

[437] 2017, p. 43.

[438] 2017, p. 49.

[439] 2017, p. 53.

Stella from Sister Kate's nine night ceremony. The ceremony ends in chaos, which Lamia Zaibi suggests, in relation to Andrew Salkey's novel, could be a sign of "frustration and wretchedness" in the face of neo-colonial social structures[440]. Or could it be Stella's perception of the ritual that frames it in negative terms? When Neale Hurston attends a nine night ceremony, she describes the rituals to ensure the dead settle in their graves in terms of celebration, jubilation, and a "swirl", with games that often led to fights but were all part of the "play spirit"[441]. The difference between these perceptions might be experienced by a stage audience in a different way than the page offers. A novel joins the reader and the writer through the characters it animates, mediating the action through the discourse surrounding their point of view, but although the stage presents the action through its own kind of discourse, there is, perhaps, room for the audience to be present in a similar way that Neale Hurston was present. To speculate what the audience might take away from any given performance of *Pocomania* is of limited value, except that what they experience has an immediacy specific to the form and holds the potential to question Stella's performance. We can infer that Stella believes in her performance of British selfhood, because she rejects the nine night ceremony as being without spirit. The drumming ritual is re-repressed when she asserts that the drums had "always" frightened her, and agrees to marry David. Having looked to break away from the familial/societal limits of her class/gender-specific role, she now performs her "virtue and

[440] "Collective acts of violence, such as the sacrificial death of both Dada Johnson and his deputy and the ritual death of Mother Johnson stoned to death by the crowd, serve to explore the fundamental violence of human nature and collective, irrational and spontaneous violence that may grow out of a sense of frustration and wretchedness, in the face of a particular social situation." (2014, p. 5).

[441] 2009, pp. 51-52. Was the chaos of Sister Kate's nine night as hostile as Stella and David perceive, or was it just part of the "play spirit"?

middle-class respectability" associated with the "mulatta" figure[442], a performance that could save her from the colonial threat of moral exclusion. But in staging this performance the play raises questions about the underpinning nature of performance more broadly. Goffman describes how an audience might unpick the authenticity of a person through two sign activities that may or may not align with each other; that is "the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*". Or verbal cues and the non-verbal[443]. So the audience will experience both what Stella intends to communicate, as well as unconscious cues, and they will also experience the impact of the ritual for themselves. They can witness the same chaos that Stella sees, but in the safety of the theatre, will they experience the disgust she expresses or something else? Will they see danger in the ritual or the "play spirit" Neale Hurston saw? It becomes possible to challenge Stella's perception, and, perhaps, to see beneath the performance of selfhood and the colonial morality informing her turn towards David and marriage.

Although it would have been tempting to think of the union between Stella and David in relation to the Senghorian idea of the cosmopolitan, paralleling the joining of ideas between Global South and the West, their marriage seems less like a resolution than an acquiescence. Not the Senghorian taking of what is good from European civilisation but more of a Césairean position that asserts that there is no civilisation where there is colonisation ("And I say that between *colonization* and *civilization* there is an infinite distance"[444]). Stella's interpretation of the nine night event aligns with the authoritative view of the West and works to marginalise any other interpretation. This is how Timothy Findley reworks the story of Noah's Ark[445], where God's word is read, interpreted

[442] Sherrard-Johnson, 2007, p. 6.

[443] 2021, p. 11.

[444] 2000, p. 34.

[445] *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1996), originally published 1984.

and implemented by the Noah character (Dr Noyes), with all lifeforms not conforming to this authoritative voice annihilated. Rather than the story of salvation we might be familiar with, in Findley's novel it becomes "a saga of destruction in the name of minority righteousness and the extension of petty power". This interpretation goes beyond the given moment, when "interpretive power", such as that performed by Dr Noyes, "and written record [such as Biblical scripture] become complicit": "so that a particular reading of event and symbol […] is fixed for the future by its inscription in writing as the exclusive meaning of that event or symbol"[446]. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin assert that this process, underpinned by ritual/tradition, is an ideological strategy for the exertion of control and the othering of alternative interpretations: that the dominance of one interpretative account deliberately and necessarily marginalises the rest. Stella's performance of British selfhood, signified by her collapse into Christian tradition, demonstrates the dominant force of the colonial dynamic contorting the other to fit its pseudo-civilisation. Stella appeared to symbolise the potential of the Jamaican middle class to disagree with the dominant discourse. That is, to establish a link to its own heritage, to identify and acknowledge the constraints of Eurocentrism and establish its own identity/identities. But the play underscores the societal difficulties of realising this, without any overt oppressive behaviour needed from the West. And yet, it also keeps the performance in motion, and so the interpretive force is not fixed in scripture, but the colonial structures, the socialisation as described by Fanon, and the mechanisms for how the Western values are self-perpetuated, as discussed by Ahmed, are forced to play out again and again.

The form, then, lends itself to a fluidity of meaning that depends on performance and the interpretation of that performance by the audience. That the audience experience exposure to both Kate's yard and the Deacon's living room undermines the boundaries of the "total institution", as

[446]Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002, p. 99-101.

defined by Goffman[447], through the control over communication. Dialogue between the two groups is mediated by Sister Kate, but the audience experience a more overarching view of the Manners family and the revivalists, with the two social spheres brought to life in a way that may be quite visceral, through body language, costume, and other aspects of "front" Goffman describes in the performance of self[448]. Although the playwright does exert control over what verbal information is communicated in total, and the values expressed by the play are entrenched, it is possible that these aspects of performance might comment on Du Boisian double-consciousness. And so there is still a question mark over how much *Pocomania* offers a recognition of that concept, given the possibilities of the form, or whether the writing is subject to it, to some extent. As Lisa Tomlinson

[447] 2007, p. 8. While we saw Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin describe the "total institution" as separate to the exertion of imperial power, Goffman includes "colonial compounds" in his categories of total institutions. What makes the total institution interesting in relation to the Manners's interaction with Sister Kate's yard, is that while they appear to offer the institutional binary of staff and inmates, as well as some of the boundaries in terms of communication, social status, and the presentation of selfhood, both groups operate under the ultimate gaze of the colonial ruler. Goffman describes the staff of total institutions as being integrated with wider society, but the Manners and the revivalists, while operating at different class statuses from each other, are viewed at a distance by the metropole collapsed together by racial, and relative class categories. They are both operating on the peripheries of empire.

[448] Goffman describes setting and "personal front" as integral aspects of presentation, which "may include: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures" (2021, p. 29), all of which may vary from one performance, one casting, one director, to another.

says, Marson was influenced by Marcus Garvey[449], who was traditional regarding gender-specific roles, and Taylor tells us that this was a long-standing trait of black intellectual society, that a strong patriarch was central to black nationalism. She says that Garvey argued this benefited women because it gave them "the opportunity to develop their God-given talents"; that is, home-making and nurturing the next generation[450]. Stella's marriage to David, then, could be read in terms of Garveyism. Similarly, the play's interest in religion reflects its prominence not only in Marson's life[451] but in Garvey's life, too. Discussions around Garvey as a religious man, even that the organisation he founded, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), was a religious, as well as civil, movement, identify the ways he was attempting to re-interpret God and the Bible to "raise the consciousness of the black man"[452]. This still grounds religious belief in a Christian God. The gender-specific roles, morality and femininity of American/Western culture reflect the patriarchal structure of Christianity as the dominant religion of the early 20th century. As ambitious as Garvey's vision may have been, it is set in motion by the duality that perpetuates American/Western culture as the benchmark of black nationalism. So, how can a Christian organisation, even one with a black God, combat imperialism? David Gosse describes how he sees Garvey's approach to religion as a way to destabilise the religious status quo in America:

> Garvey's goal was to draw on the religious nerve of the black race in order to have them re-think traditional white theology […] blacks would then apply their new-found religious convictions [to] politics [and] religion could become fundamental towards black liberation[453].

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[449] "Influenced by the likes of Marcus Garvey and his vision of black nationalism, Marson became a strong proponent of the potential of Jamaican writing to articulate the struggle for decolonization" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 48).

[450] Taylor, 2002, p. 29.

[451] Una Marson's father was a Baptist parson.

[452] Gosse, 2016, p. 179.

[453] 2016, p. 182.

He says that conservative preachers in America and Jamaica criticised Garveyism as a "cult", describing how one white missionary was distressed at losing members of his congregation to UNIA meetings in Kingston[454], a scene reminiscent of Parson Craig's parish. The difference between Pocomania and Garveyism seems to be that Pocomania embeds the past in the present, while Garveyism sought to build something new out of the present constraints.

If Garvey believed in the Christianisation of Africa, perhaps what he was actually offering was, if not so much the Africanisation of Christianity, then a critique of the Christian discourse. Similarly, Pocomania takes Christian rites and Biblical narratives and imagines them anew. They are not non-Christian, not non-Western, but they are not the same. In fact, Ashis Nandy argues that to be "perfectly non-Western" is a burden no one needs aspire to[455]. Nandy argues that colonialism is "a world view and a whole system of knowledge": "even if we live in postcolonial times this relationship between power and knowledge persists, and the only way to the future, as perceived by non-Western peoples, still seems to be through the frameworks of Western knowledge"[456] (science, medicine, history, etc). For Nandy, resistance to Western powers is not about violent revolution to overthrow the physical presence but a non-violent psychological resistance to Western ideas and

[454] 2016, pp. 182-183.

[455] Nandy is referring to post-colonial India: "the imposed burden to be perfectly non- Western only constricts his, the everyday Indian's, cultural self, just as the older burden of being perfectly Western once narrowed—and still sometimes narrows—his choices in the matter of his and his society's future" (1988, p. 73).

[456] Greedharry, 2008, p. 52.

discourse[457]. He illustrates how an anti-West approach still ties the colony to the metropole, but what both Garveyism and Pocomania may offer is not an alternative to Western religious discourse but, as Greedharry describes, a "[re-ordering] of Western knowledge", which for Nandy, is more disruptive and disturbing[458]. Rather than asking whether Marson's play is a challenge to double-consciousness or subject to it, which asks the writing to be one thing or another, Western or non-Western, *Pocomania* demonstrates how the African elements of the revivalist ceremonies critique, disrupt and disturb the Western discourses upheld by the middle-class colonial subjects[459]. This can

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[457] Greedharry discusses the limitations of Nandy's use of culture in psychoanalysis, which is central to his theory, and, therefore, the applicability of his work outside "the Indian-British colonial encounter": "in the case of cultural and ethnic groups like former slaves or indentured labourers where people have been forcibly removed and isolated from the cultural milieu they were born into, what is their culture" (2008, p. 64). This is a question picked up in Marson's play *London Calling*, first performed in 1937. When Rita, Alton and Sydney are asked to give "a native sketch", they ask to borrow the dress and customs of Prince Alota's "Court in Africa" because, "we have only English customs in Novoka". Alota replies, "it is very sad that you have no language, no dress and no customs – very sad – but I will help you" (2017, p. 85).

[458] "Nandy does not simply attempt to blend the subjects' categories in with the anthropologists' categories, he sometimes uses the subjects' categories to launch a critique of anthropology" (Greedharry, 2008, p. 52).

[459] The act of performing rituals that have absorbed African rites into Christianity is akin to the colonial counterpoint in Chapter One, where David Irving describes how "many indigenous musics were contrapuntalized—that is, certain Western melodic and harmonic structures were absorbed into them—so they could be accepted within colonial frameworks" (2010, p. 3). Counterpoint was an imperial attempt to manipulate the Filipino population. The power dynamic is clearly different, but the enslaved used a similar strategy to retain elements of their own religion. It was an act of

also be configured through Homi Bhabha's conception of mimicry[460]. Deacon Manners and Parson Craig are the mimics of the colonial machine, which Sumit Chakrabarti also notes as a necessary role for "colonial domination, to assert itself through a panoptical vision of domination"[461]. Bhabha describes this "*almost the same, but different*", as an "*ambivalence*"[462], which Chakrabarti says is "both reassuring and menacing". These mimics were created to "repeat" the subjectivity of the coloniser, rather than think for themselves[463], and as we have seen, the religious men of the play do this in a way that seems to police both themselves and their congregation in the monitorial school system, as proxies for the colonial ruler. We might think about this in relation to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Echo"[464], that in failing to recognise the universalist narcissism that underpins Western thinking, the metropole looks for its mirror-image in its colonies and perhaps finds it in the echo of the mimic: "the lithography of Echo's bony remains merely points to the risk of response. It has no identity proper to itself. It is obliged to be imperfectly and interceptively responsive to another's desire"[465]. The unwillingness of the echo Spivak suggests does not express

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survival as much as resistance. *Pocomania* emphasises its political power in the contemporary moment.

[460] "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite* […] Mimicry […] 'appropriates' the Other as it visualises power" (2004, p. 122).

[461] 2012, p. 13.

[462] 2004, p. 122.

[463] "the creation of these Anglicized (but not English) subjects was to make them *repeat* rather than *represent* the West and its socio-cultural formations. It was also to transform Indian knowledge into European information that would facilitate domination and rule" (Chakrabarti, 2012, p. 14).

[464] 1993.

[465] 2017, p. 27.

the conscious longing of Ovid's myth so much as the separation of self and will, which we might recognise in the unconscious longing of Deacon Manners's colonial identity. And yet, Marcus Garvey and Sister Kate, who may also be thought of in terms of mimicry through their identification with Christianity, embody the menace of that ambivalence Bhabha describes, in that they return the gaze of the colonial master through the disruption and reorganisation of the dominant discourse[466]. Without seeing the play, reading the text does not offer specific insight into what this disruption might look like, but Neale Hurston's research tells the story of a ceremony, as described by "Brother Levi": "We hold candle march after Joseph. Joseph came from cave where Christ was born in the manger with a candle […] and He never came out until He was six months old"[467]. This version explains that Mary and Joseph were too afraid to stay in the stable, and that the three wise men were unable to find them because they were in hiding. Only after six months, when the three men perform a ceremony, does Jesus emerge from the cave. It is the story of Christmas, almost the same but different. Such hybridity, for Bhabha, challenges the notion that the colonised are the passive victims of colonisation. It is an alternative interpretation, which undermines the authority we saw with Dr Noyes. What *Pocomania* plays out in dramatic form are the challenges facing colonial populations to confront the imperial conditioning that seeks to define their position, which is the first purpose of negritude, according to Kahiudi Mabana: "the oppressed black first of

[466] Spivak's deconstructive reading of Echo suggests that the mimic will always be imperfect in its repetition of the speaker. She similarly uses the phrase "same-yet-different" as she focuses on the impossibility of echoing Narcissus' words, "fly from me", in Latin. But here she sees in Echo the "unintentional vehicle of a possible cure" (1993, p. 27). What Spivak is searching for is an ethical response to the subaltern woman, but if Echo is the cure for "mortiferous self-knowledge", she is also sacrificed in Narcissus' rhetorical longing for death: "'May I die before I give you power o'er me!' […] 'I give you power over me'" (1993, p. 37).

[467] 2009, p. 4.

all becomes conscious of his race […] He realizes that he is humiliated, exploited because of his skin colour, and this fact causes him to think to the pre-colonial African Eden"[468]. Sister Kate, unlike Deacon Manners, realises that she is black and is, as a consequence, oppressed. But if Pocomania looks back to a mythical "pre-colonial African Eden", it goes beyond Western historicism, not in opposition but in contemporary dialogue with it. It is Sister Kate, then, rather than David, who comes closest to finding a third way, to challenge the authoritative interpretation of race/class through the re-ordering of Western discourse.

With the death of Sister Kate, then, how do we understand the ending? Although we can position Sister Kate as representative of a matriarchal paradigm, in opposition to Deacon Manners, it is not because she is a woman but through the preverbal semiotics of the drumming. It is the preverbal that positions her within the mother-child dyad, and so perhaps it is not the presence or absence of the Sister Kate figure but the drumming rites she facilitates through her yard that argues the play's political position. Mabana's assertion about the "oppressed black" is similar to Fanon's description of disalienation, but the Africanité of the drumming ritual does not represent a simple return to a pre-colonial past, which we know Fanon argued against. This Eden does not exist. But by performing the drumming rites of the past in the here and now of 1938 Jamaica, there remains the possibility of its contemporary consequence. Fred Moten discusses ritual in terms of excess, a sort of over-spilling of meaning that cannot be held by words. It might be that this over-spill marks "the generation of or from a lost language"[469], and this seems pertinent to a ritual that reaches out to, or out of, the past. As Zaibi argues, the performing of Pocomania rites is "a recreation of the world of ancestors, that is, a way to renew a lost bond and free oneself from the traumas of the past"[470]. But

[468] 2012, p. 5.

[469] 2003, p. 42.

[470] 2014, p. 3.

Zaibi also reminds us that this is not a return to the past[471]. As Moten says, this ritualistic excess of language might mark "a new thing that is, in spite of its novelty, never structured as if the before that is absent and indeterminant had never been or does not still remain there"[472]. The before that is absent is a pre-colonial past, but what might be made new in the present is potentiated through ritual. We can return to Chapter Two's discussion of Bergson's *Durée* here. To experience time as a qualitative phenomenon is to experience the whole of the past in the present moment. The memory-proper that fills the gap between perception and action propels the animate body. It is the animate body that introduces unpredictability and creates the potential for a future not contained in the past. The ritual dancing and singing of the Pocomania ceremonies are a collective memory that fills the gap between Stella's perception and her action. It holds political possibility that she might recognise herself within the societal framework as a colonial subject, and the potential to "recapture the self"[473].

The eruption of the drums and chanting into that symbolic world of the Manners family, as we have seen, is a preverbal utterance of suppressed desire associated with a marginalised pre-colonial heritage. Going back to Chapter One, and to Anne Storch's research into the unmaking of language and the resistance of meaning in relation to marginalised populations, she says: "The noisy and unintelligible in language can be an attempt to retrieve what has been discarded and to put the marginal into the center"[474]. She talks about the qualities of such communicative practices, how they create an open secret, where their performance can be witnessed by an audience while

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[471] "This neither-nor nature of Afro-Caribbean religions is a break from essentialist and monolithic religions, and a celebration of flexible and ever changing religious practices" (2014, p. 2).

[472] 2003, p. 42.

[473] Fanon, 1968, p. 231.

[474] 2017, p. 48.

simultaneously excluding that same audience[475]. It is a reaching out, but it is a reaching out to the other because it is unintelligible to the dominant discourse. The Pocomania rituals invoke fear not only because they signal the other but because they, as Sister Kate tells us, cannot be understood by the educated/respectable[476]. This is the source of the rituals' power, that every incomprehensible utterance holds "the possibility of actually being a curse"[477]. Storch talks about the possibilities of language, "Speech as doing", and its potential to transform reality, and this aligns with Moten's idea, that this ritualistic language, this over-spilling of language, holds the potential for making something new. It is agentive, and a powerful dramatic device for a live audience, how the noise rising and falling under Marson's dialogue disrupts what meaning might be heard or changed by the noise. It is this that eludes the understanding of the dominant discourse and creates the potential crack in the power structures of the ruling class. Storch says that "noise signifies and emerges out of otherness, and consequently needs to be silenced and negated"[478]. To expel Sister Kate from the church is an attempt to silence and negate, through the intervention of the symbolic law, the dominant discourse of the West. The revivalists occupy a matriarchal paradigm, not because their leader is a woman, as we have said, but because she facilitates the preverbal semiotics of the drumming rites, which places them within the mother-child dyad. It is this dyad that Deacon Manners seeks to disrupt through the intervention of the colonial gaze. Sister Kate's death literalises Stella's (re)turn to the symbolic, but that potential remains latent within Stella and demonstrates both the control and the limitations of the patriarchal model.

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[475] There are two audiences in the staging of the play, and while the Manners may be excluded, the theatre audience may or may not find themselves on the inside of this open secret.

[476] "Tek dem upper classes, if dem come to de meeting and shout and sing dem will be sick" (p. 37).

[477] Storch, 2017, p. 54.

[478] 2017, pp. 54-55.

The drums frighten Dawn from the start, and if Stella, in the end, agrees with her, it might be a reflection of Du Bois's double-consciousness, of how powerful the Eurocentric discourse is, how hard it is for a woman to escape the middle-class Victorian values of her socio-economic environment. But within the dialogue, we can identify that the danger is not because Pocomania made Stella physically ill. Stella is not ill. Though her family's perception of her as vulnerable is characterised through the medical model, she is, in her own word, "hysterical". The drums trigger her nervous system, but it is not the direct threat of the ritual (what threat?) but a dissociative trauma response that causes her collapse. Given the trigger, the play asks us to associate her hysteria with the resurfacing of her African heritage, which does not exclude the possession Pocomania revivalists might argue is occurring, but implicates a past suppressed by empire, displacement, slavery and its colonial legacy. The medicalisation of what may be a psychological response to racism, classism, sexism – that is, a socio-political environment that alienates her from her self – is a European approach to trauma theory[479]. The medicine David administers roots him in the medical model and in his role as saviour. But the actual threat that the drumming articulates is not to Stella's physical health, or to Stella at all, but that the recovery of this ancestral past in the present would create the potential recapturing of the self. And that this recapturing of the self would, necessarily, explode the beneficent, respectable – heroic even – image of the colonial identity.

[479] Stef Craps discusses this idea in relation to the exporting of American categories of illness and mental health, as "a form of cultural imperialism […] Americans have exported their ideas about mental health and illness around the world without regard for cultural differences […]: 'Indigenous forms of mental illness and healing are being bulldozed by disease categories and treatments made in the USA'" (2014, pp. 48-49).

Cathy Caruth suggests that "history is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation"[480]. The socialisation of a colonial population is a legacy that holds within it the traumatic history of slavery, displacement and subjugation. Sister Kate is the historical witness of that trauma, in that her survival as a Christian and revivalist tells the story of both the alienation of the Afro-Jamaican population from the heritage of their ancestors, and her disalienation, her recognition of herself as a black woman, separate from and equal to the white dominant discourse that oppresses her[481]. She is the inextricable double-telling we saw in Chapter Two. It is Sister Kate that passes on not, or not only, the crisis, but the survival, through the collective memory of Pocomania that persists across time and space ("a history larger than any single individual [or] generation"). In the death of the matriarch, and the breaking of the mother-child dyad, we lose the semiotics of preverbal language and are returned to the symbolic language of the law, to marriage and to patriarchy. Stella's description of the nine night ritual as having "no 'spirit' […] Only noise"[482] marks the intervention of the law as a perpetuation of the trauma her earlier collapse signalled, the alienation of herself from herself, with Pocomania as the unintelligible other that carries the threat of Storch's curse. The play is ambivalent, then. Is the perseverance of the patriarchal model really central to black nationalism? David's concession to Pocomania, and Stella's concession to love, is hardly enough to feel confident they will, as a couple, go on to challenge the status quo, as Garvey envisaged. Even if we allow the potential of the preverbal latent within Stella's fragmented self, we are still faced with the end of the nine night ritual, where the deserted stage and the absence of the drumming, the silence surrounding Stella and David on stage, is quite stark.

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[480] 1996, p. 71.

[481] "Yes, destant in de eyes of de Lawd but not in de eyes of de worl'" (Marson, 2017, p. 37).

[482] 2017, p. 66.

Silence might be thought of as a holding between the symbolic and semiotic. And when mapped onto the present, it is also the Bergsonian pause between perception and action, which contains the whole of the past, whether as memory-images or repressed desire. The silence at the end of *Pocomania*, then, locates a space within time and language where Stella's animate body contains all possibilities. That this silence is filled with David and Stella's compromise of "a little madness"[483], within their married life but excluding Pocomania ceremonies, leaves us with the question of what this little madness constitutes. It remains unresolved, and consequently, so does Stella's fractured self. We might compare this (non)resolution with Alison Donnell's discussion of the difficulties in trying to categorise Marson. In her survey of Marson's editorship of *Cosmopolitan* from the early 1930s, she identifies a strong feminist engagement that at the same time presents articles maintaining patriarchal ideals[484]. It is a fractured subjectivity that she also finds in Marson's poetry, and, she argues, may be a trait caused by colonial modernity, a sort of bilocation where the discontinuous self is torn between a sense of responsibility to challenge inequality and being or becoming a subject of that same inequality[485]. Rather than try to resolve Marson as a feminist or modernist, Donnell suggests it is Marson's resistance to categorisation that requires that we keep returning to her. Similarly, rather than attempting to resolve Stella as one thing or the other, the play argues for the irreconcilable. We have been trying to identify whether the play's definition of self is grounded in the discourse of the West or the Global South, but the play demonstrates a 1938

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[483] 2017, p. 66.

[484] Donnell quotes Marson: "Is it not possible for the women of Jamaica to realise what a gift is theirs to be living in an age where there can be no limit to what they may achieve?" (2011, p. 356), but also presents articles about lingerie and housekeeping.

[485] Donnell argues that Marson was acutely aware of the "crisis of the subject" from her early "engagement with the dislocatory and contradictory gains made by the industrialization and modernization of Jamaica" (2011, pp. 348-349).

Jamaica that is both, or neither, exactly. To meet the imperial values he has internalised, Deacon Manners must perpetuate the marginalisation of the other, because he must suppress what is other in himself. But in embracing her otherness, Stella cannot simply join the revivalists, because her upbringing means that she cannot perceive the spirituality of the rites. What we must keep going back to is the potential of "a little madness", which, in relation to its translation as Pocomania, offers the potential of the preverbal eruption, the utterance of desire, which is the desire for recognition, as Bhabha says[486]. Recognition within or against colonial modernity is the central struggle of the play and cuts across the two spheres of yard and living room, matriarchy/patriarchy. *Pocomania* suggests how the bilocation of Stella's subjectivity produces the potential, and it will only ever be potential[487], to use her duality to undermine the discourse that maintains colonial modernity. She could be a mimic translating between the proxy ruler and the people, but in ways not predicted by the imperial ruling class. That is, by allowing the utterance of desire to fill the space between perception and action, Stella has the potential to move towards a future not contained in the past. Perhaps a future that is neither West nor non-Western but Jamaican.

Does the play suggest that the fractured subjectivity created by a legacy of colonial trauma provides the means to undermine the constructs that maintain it? Stella has both the colonial education and her experience of Sister Kate to disrupt and re-organise the dominant discourse. And yet, how effective this might be, in that the hybridity embedded within Stella's character does not escape the duality of colonialism, is not a question the play seeks to answer. Donnell suggests that the "volatility" of Marson's output "makes visible the contradictions and tensions already embedded

[486] 2004, p. 12.

[487] We saw this perpetual potential, associated with Bergsonian time, in the conclusion of Chapter Two.

with the histories of colonial modernity and literary modernisms through which she lived."[488]. *Pocomania* adds to this visibility. And if there is no clear roadmap towards decolonisation, there is the dramatic enactment of how a middle-class Jamaican woman might experience the constraints of her colonial life. The play navigates the tensions that Donnell sees Marson as subject to, through our engagement with Stella, making the audience experience something of the desire and struggle she may have felt. That the ending appears to return us to the status quo does not exclude the possibility of a different ending in the future, because there is the latent potential of a little madness, and the fluidity of a form that refuses to settle a single authoritative interpretation on the page. In this way, the form itself argues the case for decolonisation, even as the text demonstrates the complexities and challenges that remain.

[488] 2011, p. 368.

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In Lieu of a Conclusion

In Chapter One, we thought about how Helen, in Sandeep Parmar's *Eidolon*, was the expelled body that is constituted as both representing and maintaining the border. If we think about Sister Kate, who is similarly abject, we now see that it is her absence that is dangerous. In death, she is no longer available to maintain the border between the British identity of the Jamaican middle-class and their own otherness, which Deacon Manners and Parson Craig hold in contempt. But in Sara Ahmed's construction of the strange body[489], it is not that the deacon might come too close to this otherness but that his selfhood is defined by its proximity and separation. The constitution of Sister Kate as an abject figure serves to determine the space where Deacon Manners and Parson Craig can live out their privileged existence. The yard and the living room create a physical separation but it is the interactions between the men and Sister Kate that hold them together but apart. Sister Kate is not an individual in their use of her. She is asked to stand in for the revivalist collective and the ancestry they represent, much as the jazz musicians in *Paris* were abstractions of blackness and Capildeo's narrator is interviewed not as an individual but as a mascot for an ancestry, via V.S. Naipaul[490]. When Marson writes Sister Kate's death, the chaos and silence that follows is a refusal to be defined by this process. It is akin to Helen in *Eidolon*, whose silence is a rejection of the imperative to be called into subjectivity. Parmar can be read as responding to the act of devouring, which we saw in Egypt when H.D. replaces Helen-Isis with Helen-Thetis. In *Pocomania*, Stella and David also devour their inheritance by translating the phrase into its literal English, "a little madness"[491]. Stella re-represses the colonial trauma her earlier collapse signalled, and it is this struggle with the intergenerational trauma of empire that comes through in each of the chapters.

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[489] 2000, p. 53.

[490] "What about V. S. Naipaul? […] What about V. S. Naipaul in the fifties and sixties? Was he in England then? – I was born in Trinidad, in 1973" (2016, p. 63).

[491] 2017, p. 66.

This struggle runs through the texts in ways that are both expressed and unconscious, and we can see how the structures arising from the legacy of trauma are embedded in the socio-political, cultural and linguistic frameworks that continue to dominate the global discourse, thereby perpetuating the prejudice and precarity of those expelled from the centre.

What motivated me to undertake this research was a sense of being conditioned by the universalisms of the West, so that I would not recognise how logocentrism acted on me to perpetuate the inequality everywhere in my surroundings. The aim of the thesis is to identify how the poems and play under analysis expose and disrupt these universalisms, to illuminate how the other is put into the service of the self in seemingly subtle ways, and to recognise the process of othering in the texts that makes this possible. Sister Kate's death is an active response to the dominance of the colonial ruler, and the West more generally. She rejects the role she has been assigned, but in life, she also played an active role, not by being anti-West, but in the ways she took the Christian faith imposed on her enslaved ancestors and questioned the interpretative authority of the West through her revivalist meetings. Pocomania narratives and rituals may be crudely thought of as the Africanisation of Christianity to some extent, much as it has been suggested that jazz contributes to the Africanisation of American music via Ted Gioia and *Paris*. But thinking of this as an attempt to integrate self and other seems to miss the point. It is not that integration could bring about some sort of whole or harmony. Perhaps it is more that there is already an entanglement of self/other, a holophrase, even, which is an idea that stems from a primitivist ethnography but becomes a tangible, contemporary psychological experience when we think about Kristeva's stranger or Fanon's colonial subject who thinks of himself as European. The other is already present, if unacknowledged, in the self, and it is the West's attempts to separate or elevate itself, as we saw in Mirrlees's use of Handel's music, that is what the non-Western gaze seeks to challenge. While the Western gaze subjugates the other, in the play and poems analysed in these chapters, it is this same gaze that is used by the other to challenge the primacy and authority of the West. None of

the texts here suggest that this is a simple roadmap towards decolonisation. Stella and David respond by effacing their heritage, and Helen in both Egypt and California do not offer the resolution H.D. suggested. But what each of the writers explores in different ways is the perpetuation of a problem and its complexities, and how the wound of empire passes from one generation to the next. We have seen how in trying to celebrate Isis, Helen effaces her, much as the subaltern cannot be heard, only effaced. The linguistic and social structures that exert control on both those living at the centre and those expelled to the peripheries challenge the pursuit of decolonisation. What we have seen through the literature explored here is how the other works through the unconscious to articulate its expression. That it is possible to acknowledge the other haunting the centre and its traumatic history that informs the present.

Perhaps what we understand from this reading is the impossibility of offering a solution from within the language of the dominant discourse. There is always only potential. And this takes us back to Spivak and the unintelligibility of the subaltern. It is not so much the question of whether she is able to speak but the failure of recognition. What Spivak asks is that we (the self, the West, the centre) re-present ourselves. To be responsive to the other without the narcissistic impulse to remake the stranger within Western frameworks, or transpose the stranger's experience into ethnographic knowledge that can be consumed, however well meaning. I cannot speak for the subaltern, and yet, I am committed to acknowledging the perspective of the other, the other within me, and the precarity created by the historic and ongoing legacy of Western empires. This is the central problem of my poetic research. How to create an ethical relationship or space that has the capacity to be responsive in the manner Spivak demands, within writing that, by necessity, exists within the dominant discourse. Similarly to the way *Pocomania* challenges the authority of Christian narrative, if I cannot approach the issue from outside the parameters of symbolic language, perhaps I can destabilise, and so, undermine the Western gaze, by (re)turning to the preverbal, to the semiotics of noise, of silence, to the fragmented images of traumatic memory, individual and intergenerational.

Not because of a primitivist or Freudian association between the other and childhood development, but because current neurological research demonstrates that our brains protect us from traumatic experience in the way it lays down, or fails to lay down, memories. The potential of the creative project lies in the questions it raises, rather than offering answers: to unsettle the traumatic legacy of empire from its embedded and structural foundations within landscape and language, by exposing the limitations of communication[492], and the constructs of perception. To demonstrate how my creative process interacts with the thesis, I will take three poems, each corresponding broadly with one of the chapters and explore the connections in philosophical thinking that developed through that relationship. The first poem, "Fairytale: The Escapologist", was written alongside Chapter One and responds to ideas around hysteria/trauma, Anne Storch's analysis of noise as semiotics, and the central theme of bilocation.

"Fairytale: The Escapologist" is written in four sections. Many of the poems in the collection are written in sections and many have overlapping titles. These sections and poems correspond rather than follow on sequentially, and the gaps that this creates in the reading experience mimic the fragmented memory associated with trauma. We see this fragmented memory in *Helen in Egypt.* The "*eternal moment*"[493] in "Eidolon", I have suggested, has been reduced to a fragmented memory that reflects how H.D.'s perpetuation of the binary structure simultaneously perpetuates the othering of Helen's racial inheritance. In *Eidolon*, Parmar's Helen is dehumanised by the fragmented glimpses we are able to catch. Only when we come to Chapter Two of the thesis do we recognise that fragmented memory is not purely an aesthetic affect or metaphorical allusion to a person's vulnerability but, potentially, a physical – that is, neurological – response to traumatic

[492] i.e. how the semiotic is experienced within the symbolic.

[493] Doolittle, 1974, p. 269.

experience[494]. The fragmented images in both H.D. and Parmar mirror the brain's inability to lay down memories during high arousal. Similarly, in Chapter Two, Capildeo's narrator demonstrates how trauma is embodied. When Capildeo's protagonist cannot walk out of the sea, and when Helen limps on the beach in Egypt, these are physical expressions of emotional pain that cannot access the consciousness of symbolic language. The purpose of Freudian psychoanalysis, at its most basic, may be understood as trying to cure these bodily, and preverbal, expressions by bringing such traumatic experiences into the realm of the symbolic. However, what the creative process allowed me to question is the status of the symbolic, its embedded logocentrism. Rather than trying to translate the other to make the unintelligible peripheries intelligible to the centre, could the fragmented selfhood and its forms of communication be an end in itself? That is, to alter the terms of legitimate expression and for fragmentation to be a means of resistance rather than resilience, as Chapter One goes on to suggest.

The structure of "Fairytale: The Escapologist" is one aspect of fragmentation. The gap between the first two sections, for example, is multi-faceted. Most obviously, the shift of perspective away from the first person, though the speaker is still within the poem. "The rest of us", in the second section, holds the possibility that the speaker is continuous from the first, though intuitively, it is unlikely,

[494] Chapter Two references Bessel Van der Kolk: "Confronted with horror […] the frontal lobe shuts down, including […] the region necessary to put feelings into words, the region that creates our sense of location in time, and the thalamus. At this point the emotional brain, which is not under conscious control and cannot communicate in words, takes over. […] [H]igh arousal disconnects other brain areas necessary for proper storage and integration of incoming information, such as the hippocampus and the thalamus. As a result, the imprints of traumatic experiences are organised not as coherent logical narratives but in fragmented sensory and emotional traces: images, sounds, and physical sensations" (2015, p. 176).

given the change in language and focus. If there is continuity, it seems more likely that the "I" is now the "she", though this is not certain. We move further away from the intimacy of the "I", with the fable of the third section, and yet we are all combined by the "ourselves"[495] of the final stanza, pre-empting the holophrase of Chapter Two. The fable builds on the bilocation of the second part, where the woman is both above and below whatever the reader might interpret as the surface[496]. "Vienna" is here divided in two along the lines defined by the two trees: "a plum tree singing the opening lines of Patti Smith's 'Gloria', in counterpoint to the Peggy Lee of a wild purple buddleia". Perhaps she relates to Helen and the adultery she is both accused of and absolved from by being whisked away to Egypt. Vienna owns her sins, however. They are, she suggests via Patti Smith's lyric, "intact". The question raised here is explored in the chapter: rather than whether Helen is in Troy or Egypt, that is, whether she commits adultery or not[497], is it possible to challenge the societal framework that punishes Helen (i.e. women) for her desire? Vienna's rejection of the forgiveness offered in the poem can be read as a refusal of interpellation. She does not reject the role of sinner but, more fundamentally, the societally mandated shame that goes with it.

The opening section positions the speaker as the other, in that the writing, while offered within the symbolic realm of language, is significantly obscured through repetition and the breakdown of denotation and sentence structure: "I thrill I thrash I threat about this". As such, it has much in common with Anne Storch's witch. Storch has discussed how the use of language to disrupt meaning threatens the centre because it is unintelligible within the dominant discourse, and so could

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[495] "And like this, this reservoir walled with stone and thistle / reflecting ourselves back to ourselves, or how shame / sits at the centre of things, like the first cuckoo in spring."

[496] "In the meandering spine of a tree hit by lightning to grow across the slow, impassive river, she is both above and below the surface, offering her return gaze in a knot of green elder."

[497] Settling aside the question of whether she was forced to go to Troy.

hold in its syllables the power of a curse. It is not a failure to communicate but a refusal to conform to, or be contained by, social structures. As per Storch's argument, section one of this fairytale uses what is "noisy and unintelligible in language [as] an attempt to retrieve what has been discarded and to put the marginal into the center"[498]. To identify the speaker as marginalised and to move through these sections, via the unapologetic fable in part three, and towards the integration of self/other at the end[499], offers a sense of coherence that does not rely on translating the other for the benefit of the self but suggests the potential of the other to become agentive. To require the centre to engage with what it cannot understand within the "ourselves" of itself.[500]

In Chapter One, I quoted Susan Edmunds[501], who uses the Freudian study of daydreams to ground Helen's hysterical powers, via a passage in *Helen in Egypt*: "the million personal things, / things remembered, forgotten, […] and re-assembeld in different order"[502]. When we read Chapter Two, these "personal things" feel akin to Mirrlees's kaleidoscope. Mirrlees does not suggest that her narrator has hysterical powers as such, but she does use her dream-like walking/gaze to read the city

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[498] Storch, 2017, p. 48.

[499] Pre-empting the holophrastic in Chapter Two.

[500] There are other poems in this section that explore similar uses of semiotics and fragmentation. The meanings found in the musicality of the planets, or the fragmentation in "Correspondences: The Rhododendron Tree", which uses similar shifts and juxtapositions to create space in and between meaning. Here there is a clearer relationship with empire. The poem references my own heritage, as well as filmic representations of colonised countries, desire, acquisition, shame. Among other things, the poem references Tanzania via *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, as well as the Dutch East India Company, which may have been how my Dutch ancestry came to be in India.

[501] 1991, p. 478.

[502] Doolittle, 1974, p. 289.

through bilocation, past and present. In this way, she accesses a collective unconscious, albeit a white-European unconscious. The trace of the other we find there can be thought of as suppressed within the text, in a similar way to how we used Said's counterpoint[503] to identify the other in Chapter One. But there is one perspective, one gaze, in *Paris*, which differs from Harriet Tarlo's reading of H.D., where drama becomes a means of challenging the monologism of epic, and, therefore, of challenging patriarchal norms. While H.D. brings in other voices to her semi-dramatic structure, I want to think about my own poem, "Correspondences: The Credence of Birds", as positioned somewhere between Mirrlees and H.D. using a dramatic structure that invites a sense of the polyphonic even as the speaker speaks to herself. I will suggest how the writing allowed me to push the generic conventions of the form to build on the heterogeneity implied by preverbal language and the unconscious we have been interested in alongside the holophrastic sense of self/other.

While Tarlo talks about H.D.'s poem as refusing the epic norms of monologism through the interaction of her characters, "Credence" uses the dialogue of the dramatic form to map the potential binaries of the self/other. The chorus, which may be read as mimicking birdsong, also has the potential to be thought of as a preverbal eruption separated out from the speaker on the page[504]. When we come to Chapter Three we begin to see the potential of drama as a means of challenging the single authoritative interpretation of the metropole in *Pocomania*, and if "Credence" resists the

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[503] 1994.

[504] Virginia Woolf on how the chorus frees the poetic/general in drama "without interrupting the movement of the whole": [It is] the old men or women who take no active part in the drama, the undifferentiated voices who sing like birds in the pauses of the wind; who can comment, or sum up, or allow the poet to speak himself or supply, by contrast, another side to his conception" (1925, pp. 47-48).

same potential for staging[505], by bringing different voices into conversation there is, at least, the suggestion of heterogeneity. Heterogeneity was a concept central to Henri Bergson's and Jane Harrison's thinking, and there is a plurality explored in "Credence" that is akin to that seen in *Paris.* The speaker and the chorus in dialogue is one aspect of the polyphonic, but the dialogue of the chorus belongs to the semiotic, the part of speech that is often buried, and as we have seen, correlates with the other. This brings together the Bergsonian concept of heterogeneous time with Kristeva's heterogeneity of language/drives and their struggle within and against the symbolic. The presence of absence running through the poem, whether in the rain[506] or the presence/non-presence of an antagonist, is given new significance through the quasi-birdsong as a preverbal eruption that makes apparent the trace of the other haunting the language.

The dramatic structure allows us to witness the struggle between the symbolic/semiotic drives, and we might think of Kristeva's linguistic framework in relation to Bergson's frustration with language and the dulling of meaning through repetition. There is a sense of this limitation towards the end of the poem, when the speaker raises the possibility of not speaking as a solution: "To leave this unspoken way of being unspoken, and so unchanged by language that can only approximate how it feels". But this is followed by the suggestion that the preverbal offers a more emotional means of communicating, even as our access to it depends on the symbolic. To embrace the struggle between

[505] The potential to stage the poem is actively resisted by the stage directions. The conditional nature of the instructions, "maybe rain", or a chorus that should only be included if it can be made "as lovely as [Seamus Heaney] wrote it". Though it would be possible to make a boulder/cage that a bird could fly out of, there is also a river running into the orchestra pit, which suggests that this is not intended to be performed.

[506] For example, "*Maybe rain, if there's the wherewithal. Or a sort of shimmer to the flattened grass, as though rain has been. An absence left*."

these two language realms, then, brings in the other, the past, in lieu of memory, as a way of introducing the unpredictable into the future.

The poem continues its weaving of heterogeneities by searching for memory-images. The speaker's own history is considered through the garden flowers:

> Take the roses replanted to my new house, those roses that know a home before this, my young son, the woman I was, its stems grown long and winding through the pale fuchsia, the fuchsia with its pale pink memory of a previous owner.

But her attempts to map time in the landscape are complicated by the knotted stems of different memories, the seasonal aspect, the lateness of the bloom, the speaker's desire to parcel and send this co-ordinate of latitude and longitude that becomes a temple that turns into the sea. If Mirrlees's narrator maps time through a palimpsest of Paris, everything is happening all at once. She does not traverse time spatially, and the spatial representation of the city is undermined by the impossibility of the route she takes. Her walking is more dream-state than linear, in the same way that Capildeo's speaker emphasises a qualitative experience of time by having the river course loop through the poem. "Credence" seeks to expose a similar sense of experiential time. The speaker is described as climbing the rocks but she is paused within the dramatic frame. This pause, which is the pause between perception and action, is filled with the chorus's "*chee-chee-chee-chee"*, and so the preverbal, the unconscious, the other. By combining the pluralities of Kristevan linguistics and *Durée*, the poem creates the possibility for writing about time and absence to generate voice through a form that can be pushed into exposing, resisting, and potentially exceeding its own boundaries, mimicking the Japanese tit and the river that rush out of their proscenium frame.

If we look at one of the poems written alongside the third chapter, "*from* To Glide on Bowed Wings", we can see further aspects of Bergson's thinking in parts "ix" and "x", where the fractals are like the quantitative experience of time: "Last night I dreamt we were animated fractals,

offering only what's consistent in ourselves". If words reduce the heterogeneity of meaning through their repetition, here, the fractals are a reiteration of the fractals in "Credence", so that now we find the repetitions and consistency are aligned with the story of selfhood. This is a reduction not of language but of what language allows us to be. In *Pocomania*, we recognised this as a means of monitoring and self-monitoring through mimicry and the proxy-ruler. But in the poem these repetitions are now altered by the landscape and the echo from the hills. The echo is the effect on the present of the past[507]. The poem links this to the reordering of the gaze, through the interpretation of leaves turning to fire, which is given as a single authoritative narrative, "a miracle"[508], as in the consideration of "Dr Noyes" in Chapter Three. Where the rituals and retelling of Christianity through Pocomania challenged this authority, not by offering a direct counter-argument, which in its opposition risks being defined by the argument it seeks to overturn, my poem's ritual has the bare trees and hills change the meaning by creating an echo[509]. It is akin to the reward Spivak describes when Echo's punishment fails: "fly from me". If Echo holds a possible cure for the narcissism of the West, we must go beyond Bergson's *Durée* for the potential of memory-proper in terms of an echo that might create change. To assume that memory is a resource that can be accessed may be enough for the white-European memory of Mirrlees's flâneuse, but it becomes inadequate if we accept that there is no "pristine precolonial past", as Jane Flax has told us: "Memory reforms as it restores, and no precolonial re-membering is available"[510]. Fanon says that even attempting to recover a black memory or history would simply reproduce the same predictable inequalities. But, if Pocomania rituals do not hold the memory of an ancestry, we might,

[507] "To hear the past ending before the present sounds, is this what I have wanted?"

[508] "I was told about myself and the bird confirms this. Don't ask me how I know this is the only interpretation of the signs. Today, a miracle. The leaves turned to fire."

[509] "Or let the leaves fall and the song echo, each repetition changed by the shape of the hills."

[510] 2004, p. 912.

again, turn to the semiotic language of the drumming ceremonies as accessing the collective unconscious, in the absence of "pristine" memory. "*from* To Glide on Bowed Wings" literalises this concept. As with so much of what has been discussed, the past and present are experienced simultaneously to create the potential for new meaning. The echo, in the poem, is considered alongside the collective unconscious expressed by the birds through their digested memories now flowering via the bird dispersal of seeds. In the end, counterpoint is suggested, through expressions of the unconscious, as an ever-present absence or potential for the other to bring about something new in the future. The poem combines ideas of subjugation, collective memories, and a reordering and returning of the dominant gaze[511]. These ideas are brought together, across the poetic research and three chapters, into a framework that has the potential to resist the processes of othering and in search of a new dynamic discourse; one with the capacity to be responsive to the traumatic legacy of global history and the plurality of selfhoods seeking expression.

[511] Several of the poems accompanying the thesis have been published in literary journals. The first two sections appear in my second full-length collection, *The Blue Hour,* published by Longbarrow Press in 2023.

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Echolalia

i. Hellebore

Correspondences: Silence

When Cristofori invented the piano, he created the mechanism
that makes the hammer fall away and not rebound to sound
the string again. I tell you this thinking about the man who set fire
to his piano and played its collapsing frame the length
of Debussy's *Clair de Lune* – but also because of a child's hand
that slips from his mother's and into his own son's fingers,
the force of that (grand)mother's impulse to sound the string again.
All her names mean mother, the way Sontag comes to read
what a photograph should say in light of what's passed. She
is talking about catastrophe, and this is not in any real sense
a catastrophe. What is not temporary, love? My love is like a piano
in flames, playing in plumes of D flat major. My love
is the catabolic drift of moonlight and smoke, the accompanying
part-song of blackbirds. It is the opposite of silence
(an original, inanimate state), the effort it takes to hold quiet.

Fairytale: The Purple Iris

I don't believe in ghosts but there are other hauntings. The long-stemmed irises in my mother's day vase, a hieroglyphic haunting in one's own home, alone and ok with that. Each fresh iteration transposes what's been, adds rooms and paint, a sampling of wallpaper like a musical phrase, or a bird that flies inside by mistake before heading out with this new knowledge.

Do you desire how I in bloom
become one thing? What will die with me?
Without consolation, thought-spores
like pollen, fill the room

The noise a person makes, dying, preverbal and full of fluid. Her own rhythm, intonation. Kepler believed the planets each had their own pitch, defined by their orbits' nearest and furthest points from the sun. Mercury sings soprano, the earth alto, and so on. The maternal earth singing to its children. A shadow passing the end of the bed hours before she's gone – I think about this. Is this the weight of the soul lifting? It is possible not to believe in the soul and to speak of a woman being both inside her body, with its tethers and heat, and outside time in this absence of syntax, which is not an absence of meaning but of convention, the city street-lit like a string of questions climbing the hills. A daughter catching her mother in this here-and-there state might ask what she hopes to understand, or in the cadence and metre of this last language, return to the echolalia of her first. Leaves repeating the last summer's leaves. To buy flowers, then, is to understand the nature of motherhood. There is nothing unnatural about the iris's slow-at-first falling into its constituent parts.

Fairytale: The Hathersage Road

Tiny white moths in the bracken and heather flit up like delicate, anxious thoughts. You ask if I'm as well as I seem, and I tell you about the wild-tiger butterfly, low along the bedding plants and irrigated dust. I want to make this picture for you to speculate to and from – to have been so much in the desert, and still surrounded by colour. I map my hyper-vigilant body apportioned between the sand and hibiscus, as though in dialogue. As though the sand were the unconscious of trees.

A mountain apollo, not to be held in cupped hands
but separate from yourself, like a psalter split in two

and sold into different collections. To read one half
is to call to the other, to have it answer

So much has been given to the consideration of blue. These harebells, for example. Berger says blue is both adorning and modest, *the robe of the Madonna*. That through the sway of these conflicting ideals, in blue we find the erotic. Does this allude to the eternal paradox of mother as virgin? Were the two women given the same name in that story to grant our fantasy of the maternal body, as well as its human urgency? I divide the colours of my desire against the sedge and gritstone, not for you to acquire or reject, but in awe of this fragmented light, without hope of resolution.

Fairytale: The Escapologist

i.

What would I be without this loan this load
this living with accuracy would I be more or less

though I've never considered this dance a gift
this dandelion a gift

When I watch the finch
I become aware of how devastating it is to me
to see an epoch not in tinderboxes
not in timpanists of darling
you might imagine in the desert
but in everyday

I can't see the finch without knowing the ruse
the run-up When I go for a walk
it's my realist to choose
the shortest not because I'm tired
or have somewhere else to be but because
to ward off is to take away my capacity for return

I thrill I thrash I threat about this
about what this might mean to always
have an echo on the exit

ii.

The lotus nymph turns herself into a tree, her pink, hysterical flowers describing her trauma to those who hear the language. The rest of us see beauty where the story has fallen away. There are contemporary manifestations, with modern names, such as psychogenic non-epileptic seizures, that can wrap a person's thoughts in ivy. In the meandering spine of a tree hit by lightning to grow across the slow, impassive river, she is both above and below the surface, offering her return gaze in a knot of green elder.

iii.

The fable of the two trees: a plum tree singing the opening lines of Patti Smith's "Gloria", in counterpoint to the Peggy Lee of a wild purple buddleia. *Play the guitar. Play it again, my Johnny.* Vienna, in her white dress, sits equidistant between them, figuring the equation that reconciles innocence with survival. It is a reworking of the scene where she plays the piano against that ochre backdrop and the black suits of the law, absolved by Johnny of the last five years, but made to stand for the crimes of others. Is she demonstrating her innocence or her isolation? At least in isolation, her sins, if that's what they are, are her own. What drives a person to the clean waters of the film's end? *Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine*, the plum tree sings. To be cleansed. Resurrected. My sins intact.

iv.

And like this, this reservoir walled with stone and thistle
reflecting ourselves back to ourselves, or how shame
sits at the centre of things, like the first cuckoo in spring.

Postcard

… and the violence
of this periwinkle shell

its syntax too soon
spun to a point

as though change
were always so sudden

completely itself
(as sea oak is)

to climb inside
its inner expanse

an inarticulate floating
to add weight

in lieu of love
which is only a word

Postcard

… or the snow-anonymous
woods spotted

with stinking hellebores
a path of evergreen

breadcrumbs recover
the way, the way home or

not home, hellebore
shaking its purple fringe

as I hum *A Love*
Supreme, four notes

of the double bass
repeated, the way a person

learns to speak again
to mouth the O

of over, open, disobedient
hellebore, unbidden

alters its gaze
in light of my gaze

Fairytale: The Vanishing Point

You like stories, and so I want to tell one. These things never begin at the beginning. We'll start with the space it occupies. It is off-centre, like Titian's Madonna, which is not so much a distancing but a progression, the vanishing point behind her as she moves to the head of the stairs. However we try to separate ourselves from the mother, we are all always looking up. It is a space to hold us, as though safe. Or, it is a space that makes versions of us possible. When we tell our mothers what we want, we're asking to be forgiven, or to become a rendering of ourselves we believe worth forgiveness. This is not the story I want to tell, but it contains all the others, elemental as love. We swim in it.

Not the cupboard, the old mother says,
but the space around it. A blackbird's song circumscribes
the silence at the centre of things.

I climb the stairs in my own home, as if this were an ending, my son's old room ahead of me. What if the spider in Paula Rego's drawing, huge and looming, is not the mother but the girl in reflection? Why else has she not run off from her tuffet, but sits there face to awful face? She, too, looks up. Would this imply that the mother is an aspect of herself, and that this aspect is monstrous? Without intention, my love, he goes, and I tell him, *go on*, and mean it. And in the mirror, a dog rose climbing its chaotic way to the light, hot-pink, her easy expression, the rage she must feel to cut so thoroughly.

Correspondences: The Lark Ascending

I would tell you about the composer, who worked on his *Lark*
before and after a war, that between those years, between the original
and its revision, he drove a military ambulance. That each alteration
pasted over the previous notes, erased that old reality, as though
it never happened. Which of course, it didn't. Or Schafer's composition
of snow, his sketches of snowdrifts crossing a stave like memory traces
sung and settling through the winter trees. There's comfort
in the weight of snow, the voices that layer and hum, a sudden dark
as they open their mouths – *ah*. All this time I've been waiting for dawn
when I already had what I needed. Do you want to hear how trauma
transforms the freedom of a lark? This lark that's so in love with the land.
Perhaps the violin is the bird. The piano is the earth. The intervals
between them like an expanse of air that grows, diminishes,
equivocates. Or is the lark a projection of the earth's subliminal self,
a haunting without significance beyond this reaching upwards?

Correspondences: Song

There's pleasure in looking at this lamp, its stem turned from an old mill's bobbin. The shade I chose. There's pleasure in choosing. Its repurposing literally shines. Come look at this small joy with me, the warm-white bulb I twisted into its socket like a spring flower.

*

When Etel Adnan wrote *Sea and Fog*, she was living in California: "Look well at the Pacific before you die. The best of the promised paradises have neither its hues nor its splendor". That she looked on what was in front of her, its handful of notes.

*

What is it I want to say about the deer scratching at my door that can't be said to your face, and the pond only mistaken for stagnant, its surface of still leaves, a life-ring nailed too high to a tree, blooming orange rose, lovely and without intent?

*

Two portraits. Helen standing on white roses, Cassandra on red. De Morgan paints the fall of the cloth from the line of the body as though it is my body, the linen against my skin. What this means remains simple – but to say it. To say it, simply.

*

Afternoons, the sun hits the stained glass, avows, for a while, a red rose on my wall. To become the tree that tenders both white and red roses, or the absence implied in naming those branches, a silence inscribed with fragrance, aphids.

*

To have brought a shell to bed with me, picked from a Welsh cove. To have spoken to no one, to have let grammar abrade and brighten with the wet stones. To return now with something to tell you. "The sea", says Adnan. "Nothing else".

Postcard

… but not so dear as a tree
or a lover to salvage

what's left but the sea
let close, closer and over

and over, to hold the black-
black stone's shiny

face to your face and find
yourself not reflected

back but pressed and held
inside the jet's core

with its own old self
like memory or sculpture

Postcard

… if not the sea, rain
blowing the stone's faces

back into the rock
smooth and unintelligible

or not unintelligible
but wilfully misheard

or if not wilfully, wanting
nothing from you

its great arched
shoulders and stained-

glass memory
cow parsley growing

between its gaping bones
to sit with it, grieve

what's gone, or love this
new, reckless body

Fairytale: The Blackbird

That disconnect
between the moving mouth of the blackbird
and its song as it reaches my ear.

I tell a daughter her mother has died.
Her grief fills the room with flowering quince
which grows in the poorest soil.

What do you believe in, if not in ghosts
the rapid breathing of a blackbird
building its nest in your lungs

a foreignness made from feathers
and passed down like dark hair.

Home now, I undress alone and stand
under the shower, the soap-smell of blossom,

strange to myself, this song in my mouth
as good a song as any

Postcard

… and then the news
falling, still, in counterpoint

of rhododendron leaves
or sifting of mauve

as if all we wanted
were meaning, and not this

universal giving way
this flinging off

or the longing to have
no further to go

that in these absurd days
to drop to the earth

not for love of our
own roots, the conjecture

of grass, the flies that rise
and lower in assent

Correspondences III

But what if nature is not consolation but the matrix or code that holds our collective memory? Or not the matrix in opposition to reality, but in reality, consoling. Am I a woman dreaming I'm an emerald moth or a moth dreaming I'm a woman?

[…]

When Hendrix told Patti Smith about his version of Woodstock, he imagined a universal language of musicians playing and playing, adjusting imperceptibly to each other, like gathering waves, or not the waves but wildflowers thrown out to sea, returning now in dialogue. Does this sound like heaven to you? If you translate the word "esperanto" into English, it is embedded with hope. Tell me everything […]

[…]

It's true. I align myself with what is beautiful and wretched, separate from and in sight of my body, because the sea is how I think about loss. There are other ways. In what way can an ancient wood tell of a child that's lost in a story that doesn't resolve but is deciduous as language? Entirely unfound, she seems the opposite of this border I press my hands to. I am both desired and undesirable, while she is merely, utterly elsewhere. We are each, though, caught between autonomy and return. There's another wood, where children are named in song and she can hear the clarinet cuckoo of her mother's call above the trees, as far as the shore. This is her loss. To have never been at risk. Three prisms placed over love, and the swell so calm as a consequence of kelp beds close to the harbour, and nothing to do with us.

[…]

[…] Compare the pink thrift clustering towards the cliff's edge with Mapplethorpe's arrangement of tilted tulips. To be composed by you was heaven. To know myself only through representation, contained, repeatable. He was right, do you think, that beauty and the devil are the same thing?

***from* Fairytale No. 24**

I beg your pardon … politely the radio takes back
its promises, offers rain in lieu, though if a rose garden could be
offered at all, the rain, and the notes falling like rain
like seeds, or seed-small for the birds to eat or let fall over
another's yard, to bed-in between flagstones
and the song ends, and the table between us, as though love
were a table we sit at, the flowers in the vase.

Correspondences: The Rhododendron Tree

There's a second in the film of *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* when the backdrop comes loose, tipping the riverbank into the corner of the screen, and if we held our disbelief in abeyance until now, it would be hard to ignore this, this tilted horizon that reveals not the real world but the dream. How did we evolve to beguile ourselves so wholly, to imagine ourselves central and rhapsodic in saturated colour? Is it because we desire the landscape we marginalise, as though being the one desired should bring you to your knees, or that I, in my desire am ashamed, and so shame? When I think about this, I'm not thinking about you. But the word *dream*, with its capacity to signify one thing and its opposite, brings me back to my own small rhapsodic heart, which is nothing like a solution but a restating of the problem.

*

Or, do I believe in dreams not as desire, that they are not so much the longed for depicted in a Roman mosaic and buried under the modern vine, but the Roman goddess of love and abundant wine reaching her finger out to mine, like the touch of Creation, or an osprey lurching towards its prey? To reconstitute the fragments of an old question, then, is love a divine gift or a memory we dream to recover?

*

Both the book and the film open with this riddle, that the body of a leopard lies at the summit and no one knows why it was there. I imagine the leopard's coat still shining above the snow, its gold lovely in contrast, though without its bodily heat, the snow must bury the corpse. It's the repression of a leopard I have in mind, how the film makes us complicit in a lie when Gregory Peck's character survives the ending, betraying the physical laws of his own narrative. Do we mistake dream for fantasy, shame for love? What is it we're trying to save? To ask another way, imagine the wind chime sounding in my garden, the sparrow-pitch of its blue glass leaves – *chirrup chirrup* – for last year's fruit still shrivelled on the branches. Do you recognise this underlying language of desire, or only the late light turning on the glass? The relationship between the dream and the waking is one of Freud's first questions.

*

Freud tells us Aristotle thought a man's dreams reflected his bodily, more than psychic, health. To walk in his sleep under the burning sun might pre-empt a pyrexia, and so I've begun asking my patients about their dreams each morning. They take it as being a kindness, a general interest in how they slept, and I let them. Why not? But in the logs I'm making, I'm hoping to find a significance between the stories they tell and their cardiovascular observations, as a form of early warning score. Perhaps they spend the night running from a falcon only to develop an atrial flutter. Or they hear the opening strum of Van Morrison's *Sweet Thing* just before they wake. And later, a rush to the head, or feeling of relief. In Oliver Sacks's case studies, he meets a New York grandmother who, after a stroke, had temporal lobe seizures that filled her ears with Irish songs. She, though, suffered from reminiscence, and as such, can't help us with preventative medicine.

*

At my grandmother's funeral, my uncle says
too English for India, too Indian for England.

*

In one of Rousseau's *Solitary Walks* he buys all the apples from a girl at the fair and gives them away to a half-dozen boys. Rebecca Solnit describes how he was practicing his defence for an imaginary trial, charged with abandoning his own children. But for all the happy moments he recalls in his walk, it is shot through with persecutory thoughts. No amount of evidence absolves him. Whatever we think we're guilty of, and we are (sometimes) guilty, it's only a placeholder for some deeper shame. What if guilt is (sometimes) only a rhododendron tree flowering mindlessly along the riverbank? What if these flowers were there from the start, a haunting, perhaps, their pink heads bending towards their own reflection, exiled under their own weight?

*

Dysmetria is the inability to judge distance. It is a function of the cerebellum, to know when to stop.

*

I dream in fragments of *Rhapsody in Blue*
the opening phrase never descending
to answer its own question. I dream in notations

of wildflowers, the iolanthe's quiet dissent
against the clamouring larkspur, the Shepard Tone
of time in dreams, rising, always rising

*

Do you remember that early episode of the *West Wing*? Cartographers for Social Equality show CJ the Gall-Peters Projection, where the relative size of the continents is rendered accurately. Africa is huge (and potentially, upside down), and yet, it was on the radio yesterday, as though this is news. The world is as imaginary as it ever was. How strange we're struggling to flatten the earth after waiting so long to learn it's round. But if the Peters Projection is criticised for its distortions of shape and distance, there's a beautiful butterfly map that shows the world unfolding from an octahedron. Africa and South America, like facing forewings, spread out over the rest. You and I are barely there, and as though asking the stars to define my place, I'm happy to be found so harmless.

*

Harmless, no. That we recite stories equating size with power may or may not be the fault of the old maps, but it is perpetuated by them. In another Solnit book, she says: *We think we tell stories, but stories often tell us, tell us to love or to hate, to see or be blind* … She has a story about a roomful of apricots stripped from her mother's tree. They are, she says, her birthright, her fairy tale quest. Across the pages some of the fruit begin to rot. Others are preserved and sent to friends. That story doesn't belong to me, but it does flicker through the one I want to tell you, about the trauma we're gifted, pass on.

*

There's a vintage shop that's always closed, and a jug in the window. I imagine it holding a handful of purple irises. It's shaped like a savoy cabbage, its handle wrought from ropes of corn, but it's not the shape that makes me hungry. It might be the colour or glaze, but whatever else this hunger is, it is also only hunger. I've felt it before, as a child reading *Rapunzel*. The witch's garden made me want, as the young mother did, what didn't belong to me. No shame, child. I became aware of my small round stomach, how it could be sucked into nothing, and I could disappear. The inverse was also true. Mostly I want to hold the jug. There's harmony in its overlapping leaves. I am ravenous with it. I felt it again tonight when I read *Strawberry Fields* was made by combining two songs in different keys, one sped up, the other slowed until almost, almost perfect. And there it is, I want to tell you, the harmony of the continuous soul blown wide open.

*

When his daughter calls out from a dream, *Anna Freud,*
strawberries, wild strawberries, he says, she's using her name
to take possession of what she's been denied that day.
But he also says that dreaming of fruit
of apples, cherries, or a half-eaten pear, signifies desire
for the mother's breast, to feed from it, to be it.
To both possess and be possessed by what has been forbidden.
Do we ever learn to live with less? The literal work
of keeping the apricots from going to waste. I want this.

*

Angela Pelster tells us that Indian Yellow was, perhaps, introduced there from Persia, and made from the urine of cows that ate nothing but mangoes. She describes how Vermeer's paintings glow with it, as though they're lit from within. (This phrase applies to other fruits. Plath's blackberries. Or is it the meadows? Kleinzahler's peaches.) What I like about the Vermeer passage is what she says he understands: *the way a red dress was never only red, but smoldering blue inside its shadowed folds; the way a wall was pockmarked with light, with every color in the room layered beneath it*. Her mother's favourite colour is yellow. She says this is because she's Dutch. Because of Vermeer. I read this essay years ago, but in rereading it occurs to me, as though for the first time, that my family are as Dutch as they are Indian, and so I move through my house looking for evidence, for yellow. A cushion or vase. It's hard, she says, when looking at a beautiful thing, to know where the beauty is coming from.

*

Sacks describes the movement of a patient's paintings
from figurative to abstract as the pathology of the occipital lobe.
This man no longer thinks in images, dreams in them.
And if he might acknowledge the colour yellow
or the geometry of a globe, strawberries, or his wife's face,
the soul it expresses, are lost to him. To be unable
to perceive the whole, or your own whole in relation to it.
Is this the same as wanting nothing? I dreamt the blue nude
of Georgia O'Keeffe's stepped out from the print
on my bedroom wall, climbed under the covers, held me.
I dream in blue and green. In rhythm. I dream in jazz drums,
a kind of rain or echolocation, the reverberation
of desire sketched across the blue-night shoreline, presenting
itself in blue waves, always coming, closer, closer.

Postcard

… so to make a soft bed
of gingko and alder

as though to hold Medusa's
head while I wash

my hands, this monster
we carry and can't

pronounce, loud
and distant, a note above

the stave for the horn
to erase the sound it creates

or the candlesnuff fungus
that lights, revises

the buddleia stump
with its own insistent love

Fairytale: Rain

A woman's tongue was shot with an arrow when she spoke of her own beauty, and though the tongue is vascular, I think, rather than blood loss, it was the loss of language that killed her. That to be unable to say what we want, to be unable to name desire even to yourself, is something a person might die from. The world we experience is drawn from what's caught in the lines of language. If we had the word for walking against the wind for fun, wouldn't we be less inclined to envy, more able to love? That in such a world made possible by language and weather, we'd be happy? A tongue might be rebuilt. Even a damaged language centre can find new pathways to speech. Think of a tree cut back to the ground, how with time and rain, this coppiced wood might be absolved, learn regrowth. The foliage, though it continues to lean into the light, isn't the same as it was. The network of sap that nurtures it isn't the same, and perhaps the altered acidity of the soil has turned your pink blossom blue, your conceivable world changed with these new linguistic birds and insects.

Correspondences: Oak
after James Canton

With each ending, he returns to the ancient oak
until he is, perhaps at last, alone. He talks about sailing
too far from the tree, and I think this anchoring
saves him. He's telling me what I need
though I'm aware of how much I'm looking
exactly for this.
The comfort is in the illusion
of constancy. Or, is it in the seasonal, the falling, again?
You touch my arm as you walk by. By this
I mean only to register an encounter
which is how we mean at all.

*

Think of the canopy as delimiting this space
where such an encounter is possible. Under its cover
the conditions provide the ghost life
of bats and birds
that would, he says, have been here
had all the oaks survived.
When you slip your hand into my pocket
when I let you
we open a dialogue both with each other and
with these ghost birds, the bullfinch
lamenting the morning sun.

*

Not constancy, then, but longevity.
That's what he's saying about *oak knowledge*.
To rest a hand on the tree and feel its outlasting calm
the slow rhythm of eight-hundred years.
To mark time with the turning inwards in snow
the dismantling of leaves.
Are we changed in this, exposed as we are?
What is this need to hold my body
against something more lovely
against more than myself?

*

I've become aware of the disconnect between my body
and the stories it tells. I am dominated by
and change the oak
the way a nesting owl lines its tree hole

alters the surrounding air with its call.
But an owl that thinks itself tree. Tells tree stories.
Grows to the shape of the wind.

*

What do we want from each other, if not each other, *each oak's own oakness*?

*

The oak reading is mapped against the recomposing
of Vivaldi's *Spring*. It is possible to talk about this
in the same terms as the tree
how the composer had to see the music, feel the strings
as though they were his own
to meet them, suddenly
be moved by them, before he could transform them.
Not equals, but there was love.
The ways we leave each other changed
a violin phrase caught in the branches.

Correspondences: Against the Blue of Longing, the Proximity of Green

Japonica grips tight to its little leaves, a bottle of Chartreuse held to the light. Japonica leaves like small print, details. Parakeet-green pieces of torn paper shaking in the wind. To recognise Japonica is to know it again, as though something laid down in memory surfaces with its flowering, a cluster of pink pressed between pages, and now, years later, recovered. This is all I wanted to say, the simplest thing about love, that it is possible to know a stranger again, the calming vanilla of old books, a name unearthed, the stem preserved.

ii. **Credence**

***from* Fairytale: Study for the hopeful on underglaze painted ceramic**

… to be carried through the woods
to a stagnant millpond and filled

with frogspawn and algae, my blue
and white porcelain holding water
and waiting to see something alive.

It is possible the way cobalt blue
travelled to make something beautiful
out of something broken is the same

as how a person might break a vase,
the long-stemmed iris falling
to the floor as the breaker tries to cup

the tumbling water that is already
winding back to the river …

Love (Six Rituals)

To Blow

You can't make taro edible without a little work. Look how lovely this pestle with the bird's head handle, its wings in the wind. How much like today with its worn-smooth stone. You touch me without purpose as I walk by. The bird in its extraneousness.

The Thorn

A model of four cows descended from the Egyptian gods and still their fingerprints pressed into the clay. The Egyptian's identified the auditory nerve as how the soul enters the body. Does the soul sound like tall grass, like water rushing and the chattering stones, like the stories we tell? You lay yourself out in language for me, words like bones waiting to take on the shape of wild cattle.

Red

A garland of chillies. A garland of bright charred chillies around the god of a divine food. Her lips parted mid-breath. A god of maize that loves enough to lose her head with the harvest, trusting a return with the new crop. Don't worry about me. I am immortal with trust.

To Spread a Camel with Tar

Obsessional to love whoever held this clay pot, hand-wove these patterns into its side to mimic the knots of a cherry tree, the interlacing of fishbones. To hear the stories spoken above the water boiling in its belly each evening. To love the one who, in rediscovering its initial beauty, thousands of years later, thought to add this lining of gold leaf.

And Reaches the Spleen

Or these lovers carved into a pebble. Their eyeless faces. Look how lovely their gaze as close as barley stalks wrapped round each other by the breeze. Or not just stalks but trees. Or not trees but attendants, dancing greenly, lichen-covered and pressing near to hide this shared and lovely affliction, from the god that would eat its own children, and would love their bones.

To Perish, Happily

A colony of bats flies inside to eat the flora and flourishing bugs from the heart, as though the chaos of wings could undo this gnarl with their opening, opening.

On Listening to *My Baby's Taking Me Home* by Sparks

A house in which rain does not fall, a place in which spears are not feared, as open as if in a garden without a fence around it. (Irish; author unknown; ninth century)

Home, like a ritual. Like a hat taken off, head lowered at the back step, my breath held to hear the song more clearly. A sort of peace in the repeated word falling as leaves on the mat. I am exposed to its element, even as I try to shape this word to stone so carefully in my mouth. To dovetail my feet into the floorboards, the lights gone on like the ink flourish of a signature. And then someone, blown in, the altered note that unsettles walls, uproots joists, that makes what was ordinary exquisite.

A sudden blackbird on the broken trellis
its broken song flowering here
and here, one repeated lyric unconsciously

beautiful like the clematis that returns
each year with no idea of how glad I am

In asking you to love it, I am, of course, asking you to love me, though that word loses meaning the more it's used, while the song only grows more eloquent. Is this loss what happened to *god*? Like the Vikings minting Christian coins and spelling St Petri with Thor's axe, as though the rise of one religion and the demotion of another to mythology met in quivering peace. Here too, there's repetition, the notion of god continuous even as it changes, while the word *god* stays the same. But if there's a parallel of attenuation between the language of god and love, isn't there also our desire to be held, to be home, to lower our gaze and read intentionality into the soil?

Postcard

… but the always
already greygreen sea

as though kindness
were always this wild

the salt-spindrift
like snow blown

in lieu of an opening move
and now these two

whale's teeth
like chess pieces waiting

to march back
into the ocean

to be loved
by their element

a return, a necessity
a question of space

between them
or not space –

a holding –
to be pulled under

guzzled and sudden
to be changed

the way you turn
towards me, or we turn

towards each other
carved into queen

and king by the coral
and current

Correspondences: The Credence of Birds

A gritstone edge. Boulders higgledy-piggledy with sprouts of purple heather. No sun to speak of but light diffuse and silver, an evenness to it. Maybe rain, if there's the wherewithal. Or a sort of shimmer to the flattened grass, as though rain has been. An absence left. A man in a red anorak, a bouldering mat folded on his back, walks quickly right to left. If Heaney's chorus of boulder-still birds beginning to stretch from under their shawls can be made as lovely as he wrote it, do it. Pheasants, falcons. A spray of meadow pipits darting out from their hair and hands. Chip-chip-chip-chip. A woman climbs the rocks toward a platform stage-right, with the silhouette of an ancient fort just about suggested. The birdsong continues – ek-ek-ek-ek – but she is alone. Perhaps she addresses herself. Or perhaps, someone else. Someone absent. No questions, but the fractals in the bracken, their green mathematics transposed as music, the closing cadence that resolves the song.

She:

I might believe that a kingfisher strung up on silk can predict the weather, or that placing the semen of a pigeon on someone's shirt can make that person love you. You think it's wild, but you believe time runs as the crow flies. Take the roses replanted to my new house, those roses that know a home before this, my young son, the woman I was, its stems grown long and winding through the pale fuchsia, the fuchsia with its pale pink memory of a previous owner. The latitude of these two recollections mapped in space, in gradients, and tangled into a grammar of now, or here, the woman I am. I would send you their late bloom like a temple tumbling into the sea to keep in your wallet with the present tense and the half built, a botanical representation of time, the ongoing of what's gone inscribed in the ground underfoot.

Chorus:

sip-sip-sip-sip

A cage in the side of a boulder opens. A Japanese tit flies out and across the water. A stone arch at the back of the stage, where the river runs down to the orchestra pit. Hanging from the stone, an iron hook and a small bell. The bird rings the bell and collects a folded piece of paper that could be your fortune from the hook, flies into the gods. Let it go.

She:

I would send you John Cale's "Big White Cloud". *After all is said and done / everything is just like it began.* But time flows one way, whatever leaves it gathers in its talons, and to predict is to look back, to believe that autumn will cause the trees to redden. Bergson says that what we express is the dead leaves floating on the surface of the water, the various and fugitive reduced to the same handful of words, as though love isn't changed by having loved. I don't know what this means for us. Perhaps, that's the point. The reds and golds were always there, it's only that we see them now. *Everything's clear, everything's bright.* To leave this unspoken way of being unspoken, and so unchanged by language that can only approximate how it feels, to dream in birdsong, the water trickling down from the moors.

The chorus boulders huddle against the cold – chee-chee-chee-chee – Light fades to black – ek-ek-ek-ek

Reindeer

If the question about the sound of a falling tree is really about the offering of sound and the validity of that offering against the impossibility of being heard, and the tree is really my body falling for yours, even as your body is absent, in its offering is it possible my body is loved? I would make an origami tree for you, not to show you the world but to create one you might choose for yourself, thick twisting branches that could hold us above the river with all its light and silvering sticklebacks, like coins thrown into the water for luck. Would this holding help? Or perhaps the falling is the nature of sound and we can only risk the river. I would carve you the full autumn antler of two reindeer swimming the length of a mammoth's tusk, the one hoping the other still follows unable to turn her head. He knows the wet smell of her carved fur, that he couldn't change his course without shattering them both. What does she see except the empty space ahead? Into that air she conjures his face, precise as the equation of water forming on cold glass, and the knowledge, that in their precariousness, the bone will shatter. The nature of falling, is then, a sort of self-destruction, a sort of giving in as the gazelle to the lion, the reindeer to the river, or not giving in but the rushing towards, the way water rushes to spew and lose itself at the mouth, this urgency to be drunk down, to be sea-numbed cold, that holds within it the inevitability of starting again.

Postcard

I am writing to you / all the time, I am writing // with both hands / day and night
Franz Wright

… but my mind
on this river about to overrun
run and pocket the leaves in its rush
narrowing what constructs
we'd hoped would mean
something akin to what's felt.
There's peace
in letting it come
in lowering my head to the current
its lustrous not thinking
how gravity still holds.
The two of us small
against its orbit.
I'm thinking about you
all the time, the way
water doesn't think about running.
I'm thinking about you
with both hands …

iii. Pheasant

***from* To Glide on Bowed Wings**

Because he had the whole of the blue sky, the expanse of Atlantic close by, and all the green in Ireland to look on, but chose to fly his greenly head along the low path from one woodland side of the motorway to the other. I hold steady in the middle lane, though put a hand out, shout *No!* and even so, the bounce off the glass and onto the roof that is nothing like rain.

*

To encounter a pheasant is a message
a spirit epistle in shimmering green
that is not rain but the brain filling

the blind spot the optic nerve gives
in its eclipse of the retina
with a reminder of open wings.

We get in each other's way / hold on

*

Metallic green shimmering in the quaking aspen, anxious, and no, not *in* the tree but like it, like light falling on leaves or language, a stutter of green explaining, or spelling out in the sky space between leaves what it is to not say, or not know that there's something to say, about this metallic green, like the last catch of a dream or memory, or not one's own memory but something before, the green absence of hand-me-down stitching, a silk shimmering of threadbare feathers spread over time, as though time were a running stitch woven to hold a square of silk to another older square of silk, and the pinpricks that are nothing like starlight falling in the space between stitches, and all the time balancing my pheasant-green and feathered words with a butterfly, off-centre and whirring wingbeat, how the light catches my accent, the long barred tail that reiterates its own anxiety in the shimmering green lines repeating along the shaft to the tip.

*

The desire for flight is really only the desire for space, to hold your arms at arms' reach and still hold nothing but the whole of the blue sky.

*

I am not a peaceful bird, a frailty of bluegreen between thoughts or notes, a metronome swing keeping time to the collective memory of birdsong, though to define myself in opposition to the pheasant still ties me to the pheasant, a squawking bluegreen sea. The pheasant flashes his plume at my windscreen, slow-lit and radiant. He is not essentially peaceful any more than I am aligned with rage. But if what separates us is the potential to heal, even this holds us together, the indentation of a woodcut pheasant brushed in bluegreen ink and printed in reverse.

*

Oliver Sacks tells us that the brain needs perceptual change and that the absence of change can lead to perceptual "aberrations", that perhaps this is why the monks sought solitude. Perhaps the hours and hours looking out on the Firth of Clyde and only the auks, the slow pinking up of the thrift in spring, would lead them towards divinity scrolled in glowing swirls across the night-shone sea. It takes a long time of looking at the pheasant to reach this heightened state, the beauty of the bird being in its variousness, its colours, the opening of its wings, the beating, beating. And after months of watching its green head turn to return my gaze, how will I tell what's real? Tell me the shimmering green is only the cuts and distrust of my imagination raging against the waves. Tell me to hold on.

*

To balance the pheasant with a dark green fritillary. I love my own golden belly, but the butterfly asks me to imagine something besides myself. It might be the green detail of her underwing. The flitter of its wingbeat against the cello tone of my own. Don't think I'm crazy to hear this difference in the deeper vocal range of Annie Lennox compared to Dusty Springfield. What I hear is the urgency of violins in Dusty's version of "I Only Want to Be With You" at odds with the upbeat brass arrangement, the optimism of the hi-hat. I read recently that fritillaries are abundant now, that this is because of climate change. The writer takes comfort that things still grow despite our efforts, that wilderness can rise where industry used to. "Life abides", the writer says. I don't disagree. But the fritillary, in its mezzo-soprano wingspan, asks me to imagine, or not imagine, to acknowledge, to internalise, to hold close or hold up to the sun, the scars of a lead mine hidden under the lavender and cowslip.

*

I want to talk about peace. Someone I hardly know plays a song and asks me who it's by. *I travel the world and the seven seas*. Is there a misconception about androgyny and beauty, or is it only that I for too long thought of the female pheasant in terms of lack?

*

To behave as though the pheasant in its circling
has already happened, the green memory of a kiss
or abandonment, or the fretful opening, opening

of what can't be acknowledged. To place
my hands against the tree outside your window
that surprises you each year with its opening, opening

*

To be unsure of the pheasant's gaze is to behave as though she were always looking, her gold shawl loose on her shoulders. On the car radio Annie Lennox interjects lines from "Sweet Dreams" into a song about her past self and I am slowing down to sustain this moment where the landscape and voice seem to meet each other. I open the window in praise of bramble and dog violet, the fritillaries that have just now emerged from the crevices of oak. You are here. The pheasant hen whispers lyrics like light, takes our gaze and disrupts it with a cadence so comfortable in its own shades of buff and brown, our story is reordered, returned.

Postcard

… real places from now on
the sparrowhawk over

the low field
bindweed ringing in this new

weather, dangling
gramophones, as though falling

were measured
in octaves and always

so loud, the sounding note
holding the note before

and the potential
of what comes next

or not potential, with its hope
of becoming

but a centrifugal sun
offering to its peripheries

its pollen identity, parameters
I perform for you, the one

I turn to for safety
that is the one singing

its own survival
and the sparrowhawk dives

like a voice, but not yours
and not my own

***from* To Glide on Bowed Wings**

A rock-sheltered and heathered hillside. A woman that is a pheasant flies under the pine trees to build a nest in beautiful green feathers. Without hope of making a difference, I stand admiring her engineering of a structure she hopes will protect, her ritual arrangement of moss and herb-Robert against the feathers that seem to fluoresce in light of the rain. I've read that the birds don't think about beauty, and therefore, can't create it. But for these minutes I understand that this depends on some shared consensus of what we mean by *beauty*. Of what we mean by *think*. That no one has asked the birds about this.

I ask the roses around Nina Simone's door
what they think they're doing, smelling so good
and welcoming me home
as though they were my old echoing grief
this seasonal moulting like birds letting go
and not letting go
of their old and ponderous feathers

Some birds mourn the dead trees, circle the ground, laying leaves like wreaths. Watch the branches die back from their ends, the peripheries shutting down to keep the heart alive a little longer. We are always on the heels of a moment more, to hear the end of the song. But whatever desire we have for what's infinite, we need the standing deadwood's crooks and crevices, its decomposition into the soil, the way particles scattered from dying stars are the source of everything new. However much I pine for the moments missed with my son, what's gone gives me his adult life, the children he raises from starlight, each of them laughing at their own joy, unaware how closely they live to grief. When Nina sings she's going where the *chilly winds don't blow*, there's tension between her drawn out vowels that give up their words a little late, and the quick sun of the syncopated session band behind her. Is it that she, though she wants to go, knows there's no such place, or that there is a place where *the willows weep no more*, but that she can never reach it? What if without the wind, the leaves stock still on the trees and no potential to fall, is not the dream. Tonight the heather is purple. I walk in it for now.

Postcard

… but is this mulberry tree
not a nursery song

though it has grown with the wind
and trained to an O

that echoes long vowels
so could, in theory

rhyme, but shelters my longings
in its curving branches

returning them
in its own green voice

with honesty I am unable to speak –
or to clap my hands

and have the sound
reverberate in bird wings

beating, simple as a nursery rhyme
and just as violent

from To Glide on Bowed Wings

Paul Simon said of an unfinished song, he was trying to work it out musically, because he didn't know what he needed to say. I dwell on this all summer. On a bus into the mountains where old olive trees spiral out of the ground like pheasants nesting in the Greek grass. Each place we go is defined by the songs you hum. We get a little lost, but if the word "lost" contains all the meanings it ever had, to resolve a chord from A minor to C is to crave the giving in towards catabolic drift, a dispersal of the self threading through water like frogspawn. Or not frogspawn. Light, which is both without end and to be held by the certainty of endings, which contains "completion". The roses surprise me with their hot bloom. Not a synonym for progress but an opening of what was closed.

The dry land bursts with pink bougainvillea
we have met before, which holds the connotation of endings
and retelling. Like this we reiterate each other

I am complete in this flowering that contains
so much of before and changes everything

An exchange of goats in *They Who Dare* stands in for language between Greek and English. Is it the word for gratitude, or less, a transaction of goods for service? Or perhaps the goat holds the shared recognition that joins them in what's untranslatable. The word for pheasant comes from the place they were said to be most plentiful, a river flowing into the black sea. It is an ancient river between Asia and Europe, though to understand which continent this places the river in is to misunderstand the migration of borders, of water, to consider its flow as dividing the continents, "divide" being an old connotation of "lost". Someone I love asks why I do this, why I look at a flower unfurling as the transient blue passing us by. Or not passing us by, which at least tenders the possibility that the blossom nodding in the breeze is offering us its affirmation. In answer I take out a photo that shows mostly the leaves overhanging the water, the late light bouncing off a wire fence that guards the stone-loose edge, but also and only just, the opened feathers of a pheasant hen. It is the moment after she feels herself in danger and the moment before flight. Would she trade her feathers, threading gold through the branches, for the heart of a wood frog that stops beating to survive the cold? Or maybe the hillside that carries a forest on its shoulders, the deciduous falling and regrowth, the habits of cherry plums. The hillside's capacity to stay is no more its decision than the bird's break for sky. But to steadily watch the year with you, to have seen it all before.

Postcard

… not again with the figuration
of trees and sky in lieu of belonging
the shivering silver-blue morning

that offers an equinox of still green
leaves and cloud, the abiding bright
geraniums, little purple dying suns

a carved flute of cherry wood
against this less polished love the birds
dispersed and let go to grow here

from To Glide on Bowed Wings

vi.

Today a hundred miles from home, the woods called out to ask me how it was back then. Without thinking, I started to cry, ugly and uncontrolled. If I could hold steady and evergreen, emotion like a kingfisher flitting across my face only to settle out of sight in the undergrowth along the river, I would. If I could tell you, I would.

vii.

There's an installation of David Byrne's memories built to give you the child's perspective, oversized chairs in an oversized kitchen, an unreliable narrator in the attic. *Saw the wandering eye inside my heart*, he sings on the car radio somewhere between two great lakes and along a thin path cut into hillside. The pitch of the *oh* throws a bright red and gold crest on the rocky edge of the morning, a golden pheasant flap flying to keep up. Musicolepsia, how somewhere in the temporal lobe the sensual perception of bass notes becomes a bird. *I stand in liquid light*. He runs between bursts of flight, yellow legs constructing the reality of things, the way words create the world they express, his tail feather, like rolled bark, defining the limits of consciousness.

viii.

In the pause between perception
and action, the skeleton flower turning
translucent in the rain

ix.

The leaves turn to fire and warm the evening. We sit, the bird and I, watching them burn and shred flecks of light that climb back up towards bare branches. He is a ritual I tend this time of year, a semiotics I was taught to read in my earliest memories. He returns me to myself. I was told about myself and the bird confirms this. Don't ask me how I know this is the only interpretation of the signs. Today, a miracle. The leaves turned to fire.

x.

Last night I dreamt we were animated fractals, offering only what's consistent in ourselves. The woods remain dark, birdsong adapted to the density of trees. It evolved to be heard, its reverberation shortened so each note is brisk as the early air. To hear the past ending before the present sounds, is this what I have wanted? Or let the leaves fall and the song echo, each repetition changed by the shape of the hills.

xi.

All these lists and worries like berries
plucked and piled
in mixing bowls, soup bowls
the brass scoop of the kitchen scales.

Throw them onto the soil for the birds.
Let them eat their load
of old anxious thoughts
memories digested like seeds by a wren.

You tell me this in good faith.
I tell others.
A collective consciousness
in bird dispersal and blossoming shrubs.

xii.

What I wanted to say was only how hard it is to speak at all. Frost, yes, the latch on my gate locked with silver. And this doe ray me of lilies like quavers, a counterpoint of something new just sitting there in perfect condition.

Postcard

… or under these pine trees
planted to the shape

of a bear, acres of brown bear
bear fur like needles

as though beauty
were a bundle of bones

to be rearranged
and blown through

to stand up now
on its newborn strength

and walk towards
us both, the past reiterated

and shed in fur
candles of fur growing

in fibonacci shoots
the birds harmonised

against the bear trees' growl
a golden ratio

of present tense, to be now
and nowhere else