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POETICHE / POETICS

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INTERVISTE / INTERVIEWS

David Malouf

A Touch of the Sun

Earlier than the sun
and stronger, our need
for comfort in the dark.

Always on cue
with its doodle-do and smallgrass recitativo
we take the sun

as given, its shadow-play
Of slats on a bed-sheet
(a hot thought

in a hot shade) semaphore
to the blood that knows nothing
of distinctions, dawn

from dusk, May from December.
Or in a deck-chair within sight of
the road,

and of rain-pool and melon-flower,
what sunlight
is to old bones.

At Hazard

for Jaya Savige

At hazard, whether or not
we know it and wherever
we go. Without it no

surprise, no enchantment.
There is law enough all about us
in almanac and season, anniversary

days come round, the round earth's carnival
of chimes and recessionals.
Good to be included

there. Good also what is not
fixed, or sure even,
the second breath of being

here when the May-bush
snows in mid-September. As giddy
happenstance leads us

this way into
a lost one's arms, or that way
deeper into the maze.

Rondeau II, Pop Song

As long as
the stock keep turning
over as long
as spring keeps knocking
on wood and willows bud

as long as
Jane and Jed and Lou are still rocking
on and have got
my number as long as
a wet weekend in bed

with you in chill November
just the two of us and maybe Sting
as long
as long as a piece of string

Toccata II

A man sits pen in hand, paper
before him. What is on his mind
he will set down now, the word not to be spoken

lightly. As if of all
his words this was the one that touched the heart
of things and made touch

the last sense of all as it was the first, and the word
that speaks it loaded
with all that came strongest, a planet's-worth

of sunlight, cooling green, the close comfort
of kind. It is the world he must set down
now, also lightly, each thing

changed yet as it was; in so many fumblings traced back
to the print of his fingertips still warm upon it,
the warmth
that came when he was touched.

The last, as he sets it down, no more than
a breath; though much
that is still to be grasped may ride upon it.

David Malouf was born in Brisbane, Queensland in 1934. He left Australia aged twenty-four and lived in Britain from 1959-68 where he taught in London and Birkenhead. He returned to Australia in 1968 and lectured at the University of Sydney. He became a full-time writer in 1978 and now lives in Sydney. His first two published books were both collections of poetry: *Bicycle and Other Poems* (1970) and *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems* (1974). He later published another collection of poems *Revolving Days* (2008). He is the internationally acclaimed author of novels including *An Imaginary Life* (1978), *The Great World* (1990) winner of the Commonwealth Writers' prize and the Prix Femina Etranger, *Remembering Babylon* (1993), shortlisted for the Booker Prize and winner of the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* (1996) and *Ransom* (2009), and his

autobiographical classic *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985). He has published three collections of short-stories *Antipodes* (1985), *Dream Stuff* (2000) and *Every Move You Make* (2006). He also wrote the libretti for *Voss*, an adaptation of the novel by Patrick White and first produced in Sydney in 1986, and *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, an opera with music by Michael Berkeley, the play *Blood Relations* (1988), and his latest collaboration with Michael Berkeley is the opera *Jane Eyre* (2000). He was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2000 and the inaugural Australia-Asia Literary Award in 2008.

Bapsi Sidhwa

Writing in English. A Subcontinental Novelist's Perspective

I will look at some aspects of fiction writing that affect South Asian writers, and try to analyze – if such a term can be applied to so elusive a process – how I handle them as a novelist.

There are many facets to fiction writing that one does not consciously think about, and these translate themselves onto paper almost automatically. The writer does not question this process, or examine it too closely, because creative writing has an element of the magical, and in attempting to dissect the gift of story-telling, the writer is afraid that the magic, the muse, might disappear. I have written four novels, and I assure you that I feel less confident each time I begin one. And in the end I am very grateful that I have 'pulled it off'; as if the novel were a gimmick or a trick. It astonishes me that the chaos of nebulous ideas has taken a coherent and readable shape.

Consequently, writers are superstitious. They don't like to tamper with the muse. Who can blame the writer for being afraid that, in examining this sorcery, she or he will become self-conscious and inhibited? The resulting loss of confidence can kill creativity as surely as the lack of opportunity to dream.

When I decided one day to write a story, I sat down to it blithely. It did not occur to me that I was doing any but the most natural thing; after all I was only doing what my aunts, grandmothers, and ayahs had done so easily. It might be a foolhardy approach to writing, but it is the only one I know that works. If it works, well, you're stuck with it, because spinning yarns, which is the creative process, can become addictive and obsessive. If you discover however that what had begun as a labor of love has turned into a tedious duty, you can simply shrug off the urge and thank your stars that you have not been condemned to the life of a hermit.

So, I'm going to cross my fingers, and look into a few matters, and hope that I will not damage the muse in the attempt.

As a writer from the Subcontinent writing in America, I am asked certain questions frequently. They are pertinent to our status as South Asian writers, and I have been compelled to give them thought. Here is the result of some of these musings.

Number one on the list (and the writers among you will recognize it with a sinking heart): "Why do you write in English? Why not in your mother tongue?" Which, in my case, is Gujarati. Believe me, very few people in Pakistan or in the United States (I live in both countries) can speak Gujarati, let alone read or write it. Like most bilingual and trilingual children in the Subcontinent I started speaking English when I was about nine years old.

Second on the list: "Who do you write for?"

Answer: Anyone who is interested in reading my novels in whatever languages they exist. They have been translated into German, French, Russian and Urdu, and I hope some day to see them in Gujarati. I feel they will truly blossom in the language. The answer I just gave to the second question is very like Khushwant Singh's when he was once asked: "Who are the women you find most attractive?" His answer: "Those who are most attracted to me".

Another question, and this confused me thoroughly: "Which language do you think in?" This question has surprising ramifications and resonances. I found myself delving deep into a writer's psyche, unearthing secrets I wouldn't have bothered to dig up otherwise. For the process of writing is at best sub-conscious, if not unconscious.

That said, let me ask, how many among you have asked yourselves: "Now, let me see: What language do I think in?"

The answer is not as simple as one might initially believe. At least it took me very long to gain a sliver of insight into it, and even then the answer was arrived at intuitively. Every time I remembered to ask myself, "O gosh, what language did I

think in just now?" the thought vanished, together with its language. Sometimes I found I was left with a residue of images.

Then a strange thing happened. In trying to explain the process, in putting it down on paper and pinning it to words, the glimmer of understanding took on substance. The relation between language and thought is truly fascinating. After all what are we in essence, if not a distillation of our thoughts and words?

Like many among you, who need to present the rich heritage of our various cultures to the rest of the world, I find myself juggling with thoughts, words and idioms from several Indo/Pak languages. How this jigsaw, this lavish South-Asian brew, manages somehow to transform itself into essays, poems and novels in English, is the mystery I will try, to a limited extent, to probe.

Let me tackle the question of the choice of language, very briefly, first. Why do I write in English. It is a question that confronts a *desi* writer so often that I'm sick of it. I give you my opinion for what it's worth. I'll quote a passage from my first published novel *The Crow Eaters*; it is set in the 1930's:

> A way of life was imposed upon Tanya and Billy by the locality in which they lived, by their independent bungalow, and by their possessions. They made friends with modern couples equally determined to break with tradition. They were not of the masses, this young crowd. If their wealth did not set them apart, their ability to converse in English certainly did (Sidhwa 1992: 27, Chapter 41).

If nothing else, this passage from *The Crow Eaters* suggests the elitist status of English in India. Although the Raj has been banished, and the Empire repossessed, the status of English remains more or less the same: it is still the language of the elite, of the privileged and powerful. India has seen many other languages come and go, but English is a phenomenon; it has stayed. The most important factor contributing to this phenomenon is the emergence of English as a World Language.

I, for one, think that we should thank the Almighty for saddling us – if saddled we must be with an alien tongue – with English, rather than with Arabic, Persian or Portuguese, the languages of other invaders and settlers, all of them very fine languages, with the dazzle of genius in their written tradition. But, and it is an important but, English, besides having its own tradition of genius, is useful. It's useful in terms of commerce, communication and technology, and it is the major link language of the world.

And this useful language, rich also in literature, is no longer the monopoly of the British. We, the ex-colonized, have subjugated their language, and molded it to our requirements. Let the English fret and fume: the fact remains that in adapting English to our use we have given it a new shape, substance, dimension, and in making it ours, we have enriched it.

It is now widely acknowledged that some of the most innovative writers in English come from our part of the world: Raja Rao, Narayan, Naipaul, Desani, Desai, to name a few. This perhaps explains why my use of English in writing my novels has not been seriously questioned in Pakistan or India. Without putting it in so many words, it is accepted that because of British colonization English is with us to stay. Whether we like it or not, it has become a useful tool, a means of communication with the rest of the world, and together with Urdu in Pakistan, and its twin Hindustani in India, a link, elitist if you will, between people who speak different languages within the country. In Pakistan Urdu still remains the official language spoken by the elite, though it is spoken to a much lesser extent than English. The vast majority speaks their provincial languages, which are Punjabi, Pashtu, Sindhi, etc. Ironically, I find this question, "Why do you write in English?" is asked most frequently in Europe.

Anita Desai, in referring to her use of English, puts it succinctly: "I did not feel I was confronted with a choice (of language) but with a heritage".

It is indeed a part of our heritage, and we can no more refute history by refuting it, than we can change history by altering our history text books. The facts

remain unalterable.

Although I speak Gujarati at home, it is after all my mother tongue, and am relatively fluent in Urdu and understand Punjabi, English is the language I choose to write in. I am at ease communicating in it, and I guess that's nobody's business but mine.

Now I come to the third question, and share with you the fruit of my confused labors. Fortunately I dream and think in all four languages, depending on who I am communicating with in my dreams, and the nature of my thoughts. There, I've said it; pinned it down. But it took me quite a while figuring it out and putting it into words.

I feel it is important to point out – even at the risk of stating the obvious – that my reflections and dreams, in whatever language, dwell on people and matters belonging almost exclusively to this part of the world, the Subcontinent. And just because I write in English, it does not mean I am any less of the Punjabi/Parsee/Indo/Pak culture, or that I think and behave at all like an English woman. I never studied in England, or even visited it until quite late in life. I simply use English to write in, as I would Gujarati if it were a language read and understood in as many parts of the world. After all a writer is in the business of communicating, and writes to be read.

As a writer examining these questions, I have become aware that often the very nature of my thoughts, and also the direction of events in my creative endeavors, are influenced by the language I happen to have unconsciously selected to think in, which is the language of my characters. The language my characters speak also influences the action. Parsee characters in my books think and act differently from Muslim, Hindu or Christian characters not only because of the differences in customs or culture, but because the language they speak, and the idiom they favor, predisposes them to certain choices. As such it influences the turn of events, sometimes from paragraph to paragraph. The language also influences the selection of details and incidents I make as a writer.

The following passage from a short story "Defend Yourself Against Me" illustrates this to an extent, but more it reveals the rich cultural mixture of characters and languages that intertwine in stories involving the Subcontinent:

> Mrs. Khan and her three sisters also move closer – settling on the rug at my feet. The entire ensemble now combines to enlighten me in five languages: English, Punjabi and Urdu, which I understand, and Kannada and Marathi – contributed by Venketash's mother in earnest but brief fusillades – which I don't.
>
> "Ammijee says the village women ran towards the Chaudhrys' house", says Mrs. Khan in assertive Punjabi. Being Ammijee's daughter-in-law she is permitted, for the moment at least, to hold center stage. They knew what the Sikhs would do to them; women are the spoils of war no matter what you are – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh – women bear the brunt...
>
> Mrs. Khan casts her eyes about in a way that makes us draw closer, and whispers, "Ammijee says she went mad! She heard her daughter screaming and screaming, 'Do anything you wish with me, but don't hurt me. For God's sake don't hurt me!'"
>
> We look away, the girls' tormented cries ringing unbearably in our ears. Suzanne and the youngest sister brush their eyes and, by the time we are able to talk again, Mrs. Khan's moment is over. The medley of languages again asserts itself (Sidhwa forthcoming 2013).

I feel, perhaps in common with most trilingual or bilingual writers, fortunate in having access to these languages. I am free to take what I wish from the riches each offers: the earthy gusto of Punjabi, the poetry and delicacy of Urdu, the wealth of choice which makes for exactitude and nuance in English, the comedy, farce, burlesque and sheer energy that erupts so spontaneously out of Gujarati as it is spoken and maltreated by the Parsees, and the body of meaning encapsulated in many of the single words of these South Asian languages – and juggle them to my advantage.

But this advantage also has its pitfalls. The Indianized turn of phrase or choice of native word, that might add originality and freshness to the writing for someone who knows this part of the world, can give a headache to someone who does not. I feel that the poor Western reader has a hard enough time absorbing the different cultures, values, religions, and alien cast of characters – not to mention the subtleties and complexities of our relationships with one another – without being burdened with strange words and tricky sentences as well.

Believing as I do that my primary responsibility is to communicate with the reader, Western and Subcontinental, I am very selective and careful with the use of native words. I will try to share the problems I have encountered in the usage of native words, and the conclusions I have arrived at as a Subcontinental Novelist writing about our part of the world. Certain Urdu words have a tonal quality that communicates their meaning even in English. Words like *badmash*, *hulla-goola*, *goonda*, if used in the proper context convey their meaning without recourse to translation, e.g. "We exposed ourselves so that only they could see us. But what a hulla-goolla! The woman screamed and cursed. You'd have thought we'd raped them!" (Sidhwa 1991: 132, Chapter 14). Or, "There is a lull in the clamor. The door snaps shut and Imam Din stands on the kitchen steps looking bomb-bellied and magnificently goondaish - the grandfather of all the goondas milling about us – with his shaven head, hennaed beard and grimy lungi" (Sidhwa 1991: 191, Chapter 21). Or an example from *The Pakistani Bride* when the Superintendent of Jails asks a prisoner "I understand you wished to see me. Well, what is it you badmash?" (Sidhwa 2008: 84, Chapter 9).

Now anyone who understands English knows that 'bad' is not good, and the reader is not going to think that a *bad-mash* is a good person. Neither is it difficult to guess that someone described as a *goon-da* is an unsavory character. A *goon* is a *goon*, whether in Gujrati, Hindi, Urdu or English.

Sometimes I place the English translation in brackets immediately after a Pakistani word, e.g. "*bollo!* (speak!)". It is easy and effective, and if sparingly used,

not intrusive.

Articles of clothing, like *dhoti*, *shalwar lungi* and *mathabana* (*mathabana* is described later) require a little more elaboration and embedding, e.g. "Lifting an end of the white dhoti that was tied up between his legs like an oversized diaper, the Pundit moved away" (Sidhwa 1992: 83, Chapter 13). Words like *chapati* require not only a description, "flattened disks of unleavened wheat bread", but also some action of the narrative to show how they are made: "She slapped a chunk of rubbery dough between her hands until it stretched into a round, thin wafer, and tossed it on the smoking griddle" [could be from any book]. A new detail is sometimes added when *chapati* is mentioned again to establish the value of its role within the culture to the reader. At the same time I am careful not to trivialize the atmosphere for the Indian/Pakistani reader.

In the case of titles, like *chaudhry* or *granthi*, I try to describe their status and function simply: "As he talks, he slowly strokes his thick, up-twirled mustache: without which no village headman can look like a chaudhry" (Sidhwa 1991: 64, Chapter 7). Thereafter, every time I mention the *chaudhry* again, I show him doing something to his mustache, or running his palm across the "imposing cleft in his chin". As for *granthi*, it's even simpler, "Jagjeet Singh: a plump, smiling, bow-legged Sikh priest, a granthi" (Sidhwa forthcoming 2013).

Charpoy is an important word in my vocabulary, and I am at pains to describe it and convey its particular light-weight character, e.g. again from *The Crow Eaters*:

> Freddy tiptoed to (his mother-in-law's) bed. The taut strings of the charpoy sagged like a hammock beneath her weight... A laborious upheaval took place on the hammock above him as Jerbanoo turned. The four slender legs of the string-bed creaked and groaned... Freddy broke out in an icy sweat. What if she got out of bed? He felt as exposed beneath the spindly-legged bed as a coy hippopotamus trying to hide behind a sapling (Sidhwa 1991: 38, Chapter 4).

I alternate the use of *charpoy* with string-cot, string-bed, cot or bed in order to prevent monotony.

Another case in point would be *paan*: how does one describe this concoction? But to leave it out would be as bad as if in describing the Americans one leaves out their propensity to chew gum. The quotation below is from *The Pakistani Bride*:

> "A paan", the man next ordered, "With crushed tobacco".
>
> Nikka withdrew a glossy leaf from a sheaf of betel-leaves wrapped in wet cloth and began coating it with a red and white paste.
>
> Nikka handed him the paan saying, "Six paisa".
>
> The man popped the paan into his mouth, chewed, slurped and declared, "Also stale!"
>
> "My money!" said Nikka, holding out his palm.
>
> "Are you deaf? I told you, the betel-leaf is stale". He knocked Nikka's hand aside.
>
> "Spit out my paan first", (Nikka) said, striking the pahalwan on the back of his neck so that the red, syrupy mixture shot out of the man's startled mouth (Sidhwa 2008: 42-43, Chapter 5).

There are several preparations of *paan*, and among them, the *Khushboodar* or *Perfumed-paan*. Anita Desai captures its essential flavor in her novel *In Custody* when the protagonist, Murad, "... stuffed [the *paan*] into his mouth and munched appreciatively, releasing the heavy perfume of their ingredients into the already overloaded air".

The reader can smell the *kevra* – essence added to many North Indian dishes - the cardamom and aniseed that distill their scents in the congested air of an Indian Bazar. There is the *Darbari* or *Royal paan*, the *Palang-Tor pann*, which literary means *bed-breaking paan* and includes aphrodisiac properties.

I had used the word *rehra* frequently in a climatic scene in *Cracking India*, but just before it went to print I requested my publisher replace it with cart. Although I had already established the *rehra* as a shallow, two-wheeled rickety cart, I felt that the tension and the rapid flow of the action were dissipated by the intrusion of a word that at best was a strain to the Western reader; it would not matter one way or the other to the Indo/Pak reader. In the following example I feel the word *rehra* would have been distracting: "The carts pour into our drive in an endless cavalry and the looters jump off in front of the kitchen as the carts make room for more carts and the portico and drive are filled with men and horses". (Sidhwa 1991: 190, Chapter 23).

One has to use discretion; whereas one can describe a *rehra* as a cart, I do not like to describe a *tonga* as a carriage. It robs it of its jaunty, two-wheeled, one-horse character. Again, I am at pains to embed its description naturally with the action in the scene, sometimes creating the scene just to accommodate the *tonga*, which has played a fair role in all my novels so far. The following is an example from *Cracking India*:

> Dazed with the heat, we pile perspiring into the tonga. Mother and Ayah in back and Adi and I up front with the tongaman. We sit back to back on a bench divided by a quilted backrest. A flimsy canvas canopy shelters us from the sun. The tonga is held together by two enormous wooded wheels on either side of the shaft and is balanced by the harnessed horse. Up front we are more secure - unless the horse falls (Sidhwa 1991: 41, Chapter 5).

In later scenes I recall the description of the *tonga* for the reader with a qualifying word or two, e.g. "Adi pats the horse's rump. The animal swishes his bristly tail and blows wind in our faces" (Sidhwa 1991: 41, Chapter 5). This conveys an idea of the distance between the horse and the passengers, and how they are placed.

All this is not a conscious effort; the writer in me almost automatically embellishes a Gujarati or Urdu word with an added detail, or uses a word which I

think gives the story its cultural flavor.

Now, this consideration of the reader is also born of my own impatience with words which are alien and meaningless to me. The inclusion of French or Latin words aggravates me in the books I read in English. If I can ignore them, well and good; if not, I ignore the book. In good translations I notice the translators use very few native words or are at great pains to establish a word fully if it has to be used.

Words from another language, I feel, are often inserted by the author as a lazy way to add color, or create atmosphere, with little effort to explain or to embed the word. This is particularly obvious and annoying in British writers writing about India. They feel if they use words like *pani* and *khansama* they evoke the atmosphere of India sufficiently. But the *desi* author cannot get away with this nonsense. Because much more important than using native words to impart the flavor of a culture is the use and translation of idioms and proverbs, and the cultural precepts they convey.

In choosing these one has to be as selective as with the choice and detail in, let us say, a particular room or the contents of a drawer in a murder mystery, or the passage of a river that is vital to a narrative. If I come across a turn of phrase, a bit of doggerel, a proverb or an idea that is striking, amusing or uniquely apt in illuminating a cultural insight, I take care to develop it. For example the saying *Hasin to phasin*, common to many Indo/Pak languages, contains an entire way of thinking and behaving – a set of values that goes to the heart of the position of women in this part of the world. I have used it in *Cracking India*, and here is Lenny, the eight-year old narrator:

> Already practiced in the conduct they have absorbed from the village women, the girls try not to smile or giggle. They must have heard their mother and aunts (as I have), say: "Hasin to phasin!" "Laugh (and), get laid!" I'm not sure what it means – and I'm sure they don't either – but they know that smiling before men can lead to disgrace (Sidhwa 1991: 63, Chapter 7).

In the above instance I was faced with a choice: to stay with the more or less literal, 'Laugh, and (get) trapped', or to convey the spirit of the homily in its larger context, as in 'Laugh and (get) laid'. I chose the second because it exposes the sexual connotation concealed in the deceptively light-hearted ring of the rhyming words in Urdu or Hindi. One has to grow up as a girl-child in the Indo/Pak Subcontinent to comprehend the chains a glib string of words like these can fasten on women.

Nazar, which combines the benign spirit of 'knock-on-wood' with the envious and ill-willed eye, is another such word. Here is an example from *The Crow Eaters* (note the word *mathabana*). In this scene Freddy, the picaresque protagonist of the novel, has just tried to snip off a bit of his mother-in-law's hair and awakened her in the process. Jerbanoo, the mother-in-law, takes the following precautions:

> She took to wearing her mathabana at all times; even during her afternoon siestas. Each millimeter of hair, combed back in a tight knot, was tucked away beneath the square white kerchief as in a steel safe. She blackened her eyes and pressed two large spots of soot on her temples to protect herself from the envious and evil eye. Putli, who diligently blackened her children's eyes, protested, "Mother, no one's going to evil-eye you at your age!"
>
> "You'd be surprised", rejoined Jerbanoo, and in full view of Freddy, handed Putli a tattered bit of meat membrane, dipped in turmeric, commanding, "Here, protect me from evil spells!"
>
> Putli resignedly circled the membrane seven times over her mother's head and flung it out of the window to the crows (Sidhwa 1991: 40-41, Chapter 4).

The use of the actual word *nazar* here I feel would have been confusing. The word

by itself is not of importance, but the spirit and the meaning of the word, the attitude it conveys, the cultural connotations and its place in the culture of the sub-continent, are important.

The shades of meaning and the overtones contained in single, compressed words like *matlab* and *matlabi*, which in many Pakistani and Indian languages convey the same sense, require several paragraphs to explain them comprehensively (*nazar* is in this compressed category as well). As Freddy Junglewalla, who lives by its creed in *The Crow Eaters*, explains *matlab*, which he considers the driving force of all action, the words "need" and "want" edge past their common boundaries:

> Need (he says) "makes a flatterer of a bully and persuades a cruel man to kindness. Call it circumstances – call it self-interest – call it what you will, it still remains your need. All the good in this world comes from serving our own ends". He elaborates its meaning further, and also makes use of Parsee-ized words in the process: "There was that bumptious son-of-a-bitch in Peshawar called Colonel Williams. I cooed to him – salaamed so low I got a crick in my balls – buttered and marmaladed him until he was eating out of my hand. Within a year I was handling all the traffic of goods between Peshawar and Afghanistan" (Sidhwa 1992: 12, Chapter 1).

Freddy is soon in a position to donate hand-pumps and hospitals. Adding another dimension to the meaning of *matlab*, and *matlabi*, Freddy says: "I've made friends – love them – for what could be called 'ulterior motives', and yet the friendships so made are amongst my sweetest, longest and most sincere" (Sidhwa 1992: 13, Chapter 1).

In short, Freddy believes, that when he serves himself, is being *mutlabi*, he is living morally. Whatever his philosophy, in this novel he ends up doing more good in the world than many acknowledged do-gooders.

Then there are examples in my novels of pure, undistilled *Baboo* English, like

the message telegraphed by Harilal the clerk on his employer's marriage: "May God grant you son at His earliest convenience" and another: "I am bounding in delight that my boss is returning in couple" (Sidhwa 1992: 210, Chapter 37).

As if these linguistic compilations are not enough, I'm discovering the exciting possibilities inherent in the different ways English is spoken in the Subcontinent and in the USA. The following exchange takes place between Feroza, a young student from Pakistan, her roommate Jo, and the middle-aged saleswoman behind the cosmetics counter in a small town in the USA:

> "Can I have a look at some of those hair-sprays, please?"
>
> The glass bangles on her arms jingling, Feroza pointed at an array of hair-sprays in a window behind the saleswoman. The name-tag pinned to the saleswoman's pink and gray stripped uniform read "Sally".
>
> "Sure you can, honey. Look all you want", said Sally, busy with the cash-register.
>
> Feroza colored and said: "I mean, can I see some of them from close?"
>
> Sally looked her up and down suspiciously, as if measuring the degree of her 'foreignness', (and) plonked three brands of hair-spray on the glass counter.
>
> Feroza read the labels on each and holding the can she had selected timidly forth, nervously adjusting the doppatta-scarf that had slid off her shoulder, ventured "May I have this please?"
>
> "You may not. You'll have to pay for it. This isn't the Salvation Army y'know; it's a drugstore".
>
> Jo registered the look the saleswoman gave Feroza, her rude behavior, and followed the exchange between them with mounting indignation. More accustomed by now to Feroza's manner of speaking she felt Sally had been unpardonably ill-mannered and bullying. She intervened protectively:
>
> "Stop pickin' on her just cause she's a foreigner! Here, lemme handle this",
>
> Jo said pushing Feroza aside. "How much d'ya want?" she asked, and

> belligerently unzipped her little wallet.
>
> After she had collected the receipt and the parcel Jo said to the saleswoman: "You gotta problem with your attitude" (Sidhwa 1993: 150, Chapter 14).

So, more fun and games for the writer and the reader: a different culture, represented by a variation in the language that offers new possibilities.

I will illustrate the problem I faced in handling languages when I first began to write, with an example. I had written an article for *Femina*, describing a Parsee family's reaction to the birth of a son. In trying to establish the familiar tussle between two sets of grandparents, each claiming the infant resembled their side of the family, I made one of the poor grandmothers say, "The baby has fallen upon his father".

I had translated straight from Gujarati (for those readers who know Gujarati: *Ay to potana baap par parioch!)*. A friend to whom I showed the article laughed. She said, "What you want to write is 'The baby has taken after his father', or 'the baby resembles his father'". Luckily the mistake was corrected and the article was published in Bombay.

I'm afraid I still tend to translate literally, and the only consolation I draw from this unfortunate tendency is I will be less likely to be accused of having a "wooden ear".

This leads me to my final point. I believe there is a difference between the writing of novelists like myself, who use English as a local vernacular, and that of the new crop of British writers of South Asian origin who have spent most of their lives in England and its educational institutions, and who have absorbed the traditions of the language together with the thought patterns of the British.

English as spoken and written by them is indistinguishable from that of the native population of England. Their contribution to English is, and will continue to be, extensive and valuable. They can manipulate English as only Englishmen can,

with confidence and aplomb, and being of alien origins in England can avail themselves of a license not available to native English authors.

But, no matter how much I may admire their verbal and structural innovations and flamboyance, I, as a *desi* writer, object to being lumped together with them. It is unfair to us both. They are a new breed of British writer, and their vision of the sub-continent and its cultures is essentially that of an outsider. They pick from the culture what is, from a Western point of view, exotic, amusing, bizarre, salable, while writers like Anita Desai, Mulk Raj Anand, Nayantara Sahgal, Amitav Ghosh and myself, who have to stretch the language to adapt it to alien thoughts and values which have no precedent of expression in English, subject the language to a pressure that distorts, or if you like, enlarges its scope and changes its shape without recourse to self-conscious stylistic gymnastics. Perhaps this is why while some among this new breed of English authors do well in Britain, they do so poorly in translation – the innovative or striking effect is often lost.

I will give a small example. While explaining the recipe for making *paneer* – a home-made cheese – I said to a linguist friend, Robert Baumgardner, "Heat two quarts of milk, and as soon as it comes to a boil, add one quart of yogurt. The milk will at once tear". Poor Dr. Baumgardner looked so confused that I quickly realized I had committed another "the-baby-has fallen-upon-his-father" literal translation from Gujarati. I groped for the correct English word and said first, "The milk will separate", and next, perhaps using a more apt word, "The milk will curdle".

Now the British writer with Asian origins will never befoul the Queen's English this way, but will be on the lookout for exactly the kind of expression I tried to avoid. He would think it quaint, or exotic or whatever, and use it almost exactly as it is to flavor his otherwise immaculate use of English with striking dashes of quaintness to add color – or authenticity – to his stories about us South Asians. This view or slant on writing I feel is important. It is the same as the difference between perhaps English and American writing and is perhaps due to similar reasons.

I leave you, the writers, teachers and linguists among you in particular, to ponder these thoughts.

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Bapsi Sidhwa, born in Karachi and raised in Lahore, Pakistan, has been widely celebrated as the finest novelist produced by her country. She is the author of several novels, including *The Crow Eaters*, *An American Brat*, *Cracking India*, *The Pakistani Bride*, and *Water*, which have been translated and published in several languages. Her anthology *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* was published in 2006. Among her many honours, she received the Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe/Harvard, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writer's Award, the Sitara-i-

Imtiaz, Pakistan's highest national honour in the arts, and the LiBeraturepreis in Germany and the 2007 Premio Mondello Award in Italy. She was also on the advisory committee to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Women's Development and has taught at Columbia University, University of Houston, Mount Holyoke College, Southampton University and Brandeis. Her novels *Cracking India* and *Water* were made into the film *Earth* and *Water* by Canadian director Deepa Mehta. Her play *Sock 'em with Honey* was staged in London (2003) and *An American Brat* was produced by Stages Repertory Theater in Houston (2007). She now lives in Houston, Texas.

Amalthea Bishop Meir

Silver and her Red Mare: the True Story of Cinderella

Once upon a time there was a happy girl, living happily with her mother and father near a sacred spring and a wonderful wood, full of gnomes, elves and fairies, where she used to play with other girls and boys blissful like her. They called her Silver for her skin shone like full moonlight. Her eyes where green like newly born leaves, and her long red hair floated and danced when she joyfully ran and somersaulted. Her mother Oestara had taught her how to use fresh herbs and mushrooms from the fields and woods, in order to cook and heal, like powerful medicine. Her father Credne was a goldsmith and knew the secrets of metals, he had told her many stories about the way gold, silver, copper, precious stones and all other things were given to everybody by Mother Earth in order to exchange gifts and enjoy life and create beautiful things for the admiration of eyes and heart.

In the nearby village her mother, who was the High Priestess, led a group of priestesses of the Great Goddess, and they met regularly to share their ancient knowledge and dance under the moon. The men of the community participated in many rituals too and they all enjoyed together the sacred Goddess dance and ecstatically made love in peace and beauty, sharing food and sacred secret herbs and mushrooms that enhanced their sense of connection with all creation and made them experience the beauty of all things and beings. They all lived peacefully together with the community and Silver was growing into a magnificent and beautiful young woman.

One day though something terrible happened, a horde of shouting rough men riding horses and brandishing swords arrived, destroyed wood and village, took her mother away and robbed all her father's beautiful gold and silver creations. For days and months her father Credne searched for the tribe that had kidnapped his wife, but could find no trace of them. Finally, one day, he arrived in

a faraway village where an evil King reigned, who adored a fiendish and vindictive creature that he called the great God of Thunder, but it had nothing to do with the God/Goddess known by Credne, it was a violent kind of God teaching violence and brutality and, something unheard of before, the total supremacy and dominance of men over women, stating that women were inferior beings that needed to be dominated and punished if they did not obey. The King was the head of the horde that had kidnapped Oestara and many other women, and when Credne asked to see his wife and told him he would give anything to have her back, the evil King laughed aloud and so did everybody else in his court. Credne could not hold back his tears and everyone present started insulting him, telling him he was behaving like a woman, but Credne knew his deep feelings and how to express both joy and sorrow; this is what his Goddess had always taught him. Then the evil King showed him the special ring that Credne had created for Oestara when she accepted to live with him in a sacred way, as woman to man and Goddess to God. It was made of the finest gold adorned with the rarest magic and sacred stones that came from faraway lands: amethyst to symbolise the world of the spirit blowing into matter and the physical body; ruby, red like the sacred woman's menstrual blood that, in tune with the rhythms of the moon, marks the time for fertility, ritual, dance, physical and spiritual love; topaz to indicate the light of the sun that shines in the heart of someone who truly loves. Seeing the ring Credne took heart, but when he saw the King's scornful face, under the jeering of the court, he bowed his head and turned away, knowing that all was lost, that his adored Oestara must have been killed for she would never give up her magic ring.

When the Wards led Credne out of the court he felt suddenly very old. All the light had left his eyes and heart. He had given up. On his way home he was thinking of his young daughter, "how can I", he thought, "teach her the secrets of the Goddess? I must certainly remarry, for only a woman can lead her into sacred womanhood". But, as he was thinking this, his heart was heavy and all the teachings of the Goddess seemed suddenly useless, for She had taught him about

joy and sorrow, yes, in the cycles of time, but nothing like what he was feeling now. A sense of total despair, of utter uselessness, a dark heavy cloud was enveloping him and almost suffocating his breath. As he walked, head bowed, lost in his meandering thoughts, a woman approached him, she was beautiful but had a feel about her that made Credne shiver for a moment, but then his old intuition that had always protected and helped him subsided, engulfed in his grief. The woman introduced herself, she said: "I saw you at the King's court, I'm very sorry for what happened to you. I am a widow too, you know, my husband too was killed by the King's horde and I was taken as slave and prisoner, with my two daughters. Soon he tired of us and said we are too tall, taller than he is, and so we're no good, for women must be short and frail and dependent, while we were hard workers of our beloved fields, back in my village. So he told me I must go away, I am useless to him, but I have nowhere to go, my home and village were destroyed and all my family was murdered. I could be a good wife for you, if you wanted me, and my daughters can be helpful too".

He looked up, to meet her eyes, but she was looking down, for, she said, women here in the evil King's village were not allowed to look up, like men, women had to walk with bent heads and had to cover their sinful hair; this was the God of Thunder's commandment, and if a woman did not obey, she was stoned to death. Credne was horrified to hear this, "How can something so horrible even be conceived, how can they use the sacred bones of our Mother Earth to violently kill Her daughters and priestesses, and how can women's hair be sinful if they represent the spiralling sensual energy of love-making between Goddess and God under the moon during the sacred marriage rituals?" he wondered, but then again his ancient wisdom was obfuscated by his grief. He reflected, only for a brief moment, and then decided that yes, she may be useful and maybe her daughters are nice and they can keep company to Silver. He was starting to think of women as useful tools for his own benefit… maybe he was already forgetting his Goddess's teachings of love, empathy and care for every creature… "had he been

contaminated by the King's terrible God of Thunder?" he wondered, but then, slowly, he gathered his force to say: "Yes, you're right, you're a sweet and beautiful woman, do call your daughters and let's all go together to what remains of my home and we can rebuild it together, since we're both alone, we can be together and help each other".

There was no joy in his voice, not even a hint of hope, only desolation, sadness and a heavy heart and mind. "What is your name", he asked. She replied: "I used to have a powerful name in the old days, but I was forbidden to use it here, and now I forgot it. My daughters too had names, but now, here, we are simply called woman and girls. Credne did not take any notice of what she said, he told her "yes then, woman, let's go". As he said that the girls appeared as they had always been there, hiding, waiting and hoping to be taken along by a man in order to be protected and fed. Credne did not notice, but one of the girls had dark hair like the night when the moon is resting on the other side of the world, and was very tall and strongly built; the other girl had golden hair, like wheat, and was also strong, with a round sunny face and a warm smile, veiled by the sadness in her eyes that mirrored her condition of slave in the castle of the evil God of Thunder and the evil King. So the quartet left the village of the evil God and King, and they felt thankful that they were allowed to leave and were not held prisoners or slaves or killed.

"Can you ever imagine anything so ugly and absurd, against all our human principles of having another human being (or an animal or stone or plant for that respect) as a slave?" – Credne heard Oestara's sweet and strong voice as a whisper in his heart, like the whirlwind in the sacred Goddess spring where she used to give oracles to the questing peoples who came from far away to be advised and guided by Her wisdom. He did not pay too much attention though, "I must be dreaming", he thought, as he walked along in the lonely path with the three unknown lonely and nameless women towards what used to be truly home.

In the meantime Silver had not been passively grieving. She had learnt well from Oestara; she had cried and grieved but had also taken action, for she had to keep her strength and wisdom so that her mother could come safely home. Every night she went to the sacred spring, even though she was still young and had not been initiated yet into all the sacred mysteries of the Goddess, she had observed what her mother did as High Priestess to alleviate physical pain and spiritual grief with herbs and prayers and special rituals and meditations. Silver had not experienced yet her first sacred bleeding and so had not retired into the sacred hut with all the other young women in their menarche in order to learn the secret mysteries of the Goddess's sexual power. However, her suffering because of what had happened (and now she missed both her parents) had somewhat matured her and she knew she had to take her mother's role, just until she came back. "Only then can I blossom and flourish into womanhood, through her sacred and wise guidance", she thought. In the meantime she prepared herbs that had the power to induce trances and visions, as she had seen her mother do. She took the herbs and saw her father with another woman and two girls slowly making their way towards their home. She was puzzled and angry. How could father take another woman with him? Then she despaired. My mother must be dead, she thought, and my father was so sad that he couldn't help doing what he is doing… She cried and cried in the foreknowledge of the hard times to come. She fell asleep and she had a dream: she saw herself riding Maeve, Oestara's beautiful red mare, which was a symbol of her spiritual and earthly power. What could that mean? Had Oestara come back and given her the most wonderful gift she had always been wishing for all her young life? Had she finally been initiated into the secret mysteries of the Goddess and was she herself a priestess? She woke with half a smile, but then she saw her father eyes on the floor in front of her, and he was telling her that now she will have to accept the two nameless girls as sisters and this nameless woman who was now his partner as her new mother, for unfortunately her mother had disappeared and must have been killed by the evil

King and his vindictive God of Thunder, for she was the High Priestess of the Goddess and this false God envied her power and knowledge and wanted to annihilate Her forever. This he said amidst tears and sobs and they all cried, also the step-sisters and step-mother, for they remembered their cheerful times and their home, which had been destroyed and burnt down too.

Silver, who was very sensitive and perceptive, in spite of her immense sadness in realising she would never see her mother in the physical form again, welcomed the three unfortunate women and hugged them, feeling all their grief and trying to ease it with all her compassion. The three women were surprised, they did not expect a welcoming embrace, they had lost the habit of feeling comforted and loved, and therefore they were suspicious of Silver's kindness, they all imagined Silver had a secret plan to poison them, for they had heard her mother had been a powerful midwife bringing children to the world and knowledgeable herbalist who also eased the elders into the caring hands of the Goddess, in the cycle of life, death and rebirth that characterizes our earthly path. They were afraid and suspicious, and as fear brings hate, envy, jealousy and violence with it, they all started persecuting Silver. The more she was kind and helpful to them, serving them by all means, often despite her tiredness, the more they loathed her. She became the target of all the anger they had repressed while being the evil King's slaves and they tried all the time to humiliate her, sneering at her, distorting her beautiful name Silver and calling her Cinderella, as she often was covered in sooth and ash because of all the cleaning and washing they obliged her to do. Slowly Cinderella lost her self-esteem and forgot her true name and started to believe what the others told her. "Cinderella, you're so ugly, with your red hair and green eyes and ashy skin (for her skin had lost all of its lustre), no man will ever want you as a wife. You're lucky that we still keep you here and don't throw you out where the wolves are". Silver had known the wolves, with her mother, they were good animals, keeping the balance of things, hunting only out of necessity, never cruelly killing for the pleasure of killing like men had been doing under the evil God, who ordered

them to torture and kill anybody who did not accept him or who still adored the ancient Goddess. But Cinderella had forgotten all this and was afraid of the stories they now told about the way wolves would devour you, especially if you were a young woman, going out alone in the forbidden woods. She always remembered what had happened to Little Red Riding Hood who was eaten alive after her grandma by the evil wolf, because she had ventured alone joyfully singing and dancing across the forbidden wood. So Cinderella said yes and humbled herself and cried in silence. The other women believed they were glad for this, but at the bottom of their hearts something told them that this was a false happiness, born of fear and grief; they well knew inside that nobody can be really gratified if they make someone else suffer. But they stifled this ancient knowledge as a stupid idea, because they enjoyed all the nice clothes and perfumes and jewels their new father bought for them and even forgot about their story, family and origins.

Credne did not notice any of the suffering and humiliation inflicted to Silver, he saw only the wily smiles they made in front of him and heard all the false words they said, believing in them, because his grief had clouded his sixth sense and his capacity to really *see*. He was still working with gold and silver to create jewels for the horde and the King who now also ruled the nearby village. The gnomes, elves and fairies of the wood hid and were not seen anymore and the Goddess spring was not frequented by the priestesses anymore, for everyone was afraid of the evil King and the vindictive God of Thunder and his priests, who loathed and tortured all women who dared oppose their power or dared still use herbs to cure and give oracles. They were burnt as witches, millions of them, it is said, and their knowledge went underground, even if their ancient wisdom lay like embers in the heart and memory of all good women and men of the Earth.

Credne had forgotten his alchemical Goddess's art: he was not creating through Her inspiration anymore, but was selling his creativity and making jewels for the rich evil King and his court; thus he himself had become rich and respected in the new society. He bought lots of nice clothes, perfumes and artefacts for his

daughters and wife, but never realized that Silver was always covered in rags, for his eyes had been veiled by the evil magic of grief and fear and corrupted by the power of money: he could not *see* reality anymore.

Silver felt abandoned even by him and so she thought "it must really be all my fault, I must really deserve to be punished as I am a useless and stupid girl, not even my dear father notices what is happening. Oh how I wish mum were here!" Only when she finally fell asleep, late at night, after all her chores were done, did she dream and could still hear her mother's faint voice, telling her to keep going, to be strong, to not forget who she really is. Rhiannon, she heard, Rhiannon, remember who you are and your power. Soon you will have to manifest it, get ready, gather your inner strength, do not believe what others say about you. Trust your feelings, listen to your gut, go into the wood, look for the old Queen of the fairies and she will advise you well. Go, wake up to yourself!" Rhiannon, she had not been given that name yet, she remembered though that her grandma, before going back to the ancestral home through death, had told her that name, whispering: "This is what you will be called, once you become a full blossom, Silver, my dear. Then you will make magic, heal with herbs, make trance dreams with our holy mushrooms and guide our sisterhood and brotherhood into the sacred spiralling dance, while listening to the Goddess's voice inside the murmur of the spring consecrated to Her and giving Her oracles for the wellbeing of the whole community and all animate beings living on our beautiful Mother Earth – for there is no such thing as something 'inanimate' in the Goddess's cosmic dance". This is what her grandma told her, herself an ancient priestess in a long lineage of priestesses from time immemorial, since the time when they had descended from the stars, landing in the beautiful green-and-blue planet of this galaxy of ours.

When Silver awoke something was stirring in her, some memory of a long forgotten truth moving first through her blood and only afterwards through her heart and mind. So she took her mother's sacred crystal wand, which she had

been hiding all the time from the evil God's priests and her step-sisters and step-mother.

"Step-sister and step-mother – hey Rhiannon what on Earth do these definitions mean? For the Goddess we are all brothers and sisters and there are many mothers and fathers for all the children of the community. Not only ties of blood unite us, these are important, but we're all truly children of the Great Mother, the Goddess, and She loves us all in the same way, with the same intensity. Yes, even those who behave in an evil way and have become violent because of fear and suffering, also these are my children, my dear. Only if you respect this wisdom can you become my priestess. Do not ever forget my teaching, my dear!"

"Whose voice is this? It seems like mum's, but it is deeper, fuller, stronger… is it the Goddess of the spring calling me? I must go then, at the risk of my life, for the life of all". Thus Silver, in the middle of the night, stealthily went to the sacred spring, which was not guarded anymore by the evil King's guards, since nobody had the courage anymore to go there for the sacred rites. She went down the steps towards the beautiful stone altar. She had the mushrooms with her, she sat by the candle's dancing flame, burnt some incense and sage and other sacred herbs that she knew helped to induce the trance. She closed her eyes, ate the sacred mushroom and stayed in quiet stillness for what seemed only a short time, but in reality time ceases to be when you enter the mysteries of the Goddess. Slowly she opens her eyes again and sees a golden form floating on the beautiful stone altar of the cave. The murmur of water brings her mother's voice with it and suddenly there she is, powerful and strong in her body of light. "Rhiannon", she says, "now it is your time to act out as the sacred priestess, do come every night after midnight and I will instruct you and reveal all the mysteries of the Goddess to you, so that you can bring back to the world Her wisdom and knowledge". "Yes mum", she said, "yes Oestara, my Goddess", she added, feeling the tremendous power emanating from that shining form. Thus every night she went, performed the rituals with increasing confidence and talent, entered into trance and received

Oestara's instructions, all the while seeming during the day to be the same passive, sad and submissive Cinderella.

One day her father Credne said that the young Prince, son of the evil King, was now looking for a wife and the evil King had invited all the rich men of the country to take their most beautiful daughters to the ball he had organised, so that the young Prince could choose for his wife the young virgin that he liked the most.

The step-mother and step-daughters were thrilled at the news, but envied and feared Silver's beauty that still shone under her Cinderella rags. So the trio decided to imprison her in the cellar to prevent the Prince from meeting and falling in love with her. Actually Silver had no interest in the ball; she wanted rather to go to the sacred spring and perform her rituals. Her father, as usual, had not noticed the machinations of the trio and had believed what they had told him about Silver: "Leave the poor girl alone, she is unwell and needs to sleep; plus she is no beauty and the Prince will never take any notice of her!" So they went to the ball all in the beautiful clothes and jewels Credne had brought them.

Silver pretended to be fast asleep. She had hidden one of the keys of the cellar, so that when everyone had left she swiftly got up and went to the sacred spring. A strange light was illuminating it and she could see it from afar. When she arrived all the fairies and gnomes and elves where blissfully dancing in a circle around the sacred altar where her mother, Oestara, the High Priestess, was holding up the holy Chalice of life, as she used to do when they were all a happy community living in peace and harmony with all other creatures, before the evil God of Thunder pulled them all into his web of false power. Silver too was beaming, "Mum", she said, "Mum, now you're really, finally back!" But her mother did not reply, only sweetly looked straight into her eyes. She felt a tremendous power surging at the back of her spine… "It is the holy Serpent", she thought, "she's back too, with her sacred spiralling telluric energy vivifying all things!" She was dancing now with everyone else, more blissful than she thought she could ever be again. Then a soft voice said: "Rhiannon, Goddess of horses and mares,

birds and the sea, travel and fertility, now it is time to absolve your duty!" It was Aeval, Goddess and Queen of the fairies, who always held a midnight court to hear the debate on whether the men of her province were keeping their women sexually satisfied or not. She commanded the men acquiesced to the women's sexual wishes if they too wanted to be ecstatic; for only when men and women shared pleasure from mutual and loving sex could the earth be content and life safe for everybody. Aeval was now swiftly moving her magic wand and out of nowhere came a beautiful orange carriage pulled by beautiful mighty red horses and a very handsome coachman, all dressed in colourful clothes, and for Silver there was a wonderful red dress, with many precious stones shimmering on it. "This is for you. Go, enchant the Prince, so that the world of the Goddess can be restored and all of us can return, also on the mundane plane instead of being limited to a secret spiritual dimension". "But", faltered Silver, "I am not interested in men, I don't want to… " "Enough!" Oestara interrupted with a calm but firm voice: "This is childish fear, my dear. Now it is your time. Do what I taught you and you'll be safe, we'll all be safe. Remember well: Love, Trust, Peace, Joy, Pleasure, Sisterhood and Brotherhood feelings all belong to the Goddess who loves the good God as her companion. Hate, Fear, War, Sadness, Pain, Dominance: these perceptions and mental ideas bring you down and entrap you within the spires of the evil God of Thunder, who hates women and nature and joy and wants us all to submit and be afraid. Your duty is to go beyond all this, always truthfully searching inside yourself and knowing whether you're acting out of fear or love. This is the only way. Only through Love and Partnership can everybody win and nobody lose". Silver's young voice then transmuted into Rhiannon's fuller and stronger assertion: "Yes my Lady of all things animate, I will do thy wise bidding".

Thus she donned the magnificent red robe and got into the carriage and was led to the ball at the castle. Her feet were naked, for only like this could she feel the earth's serpent power and keep her determination and courage. When she arrived, everybody, even her step-mother and step-sisters were amazed, not even

her father Credne recognised this beautiful young woman. As soon as the Prince saw her, he fell in love. He felt a long forgotten intense yearning for that feminine energy he perceived in her that was once transmitted into him by his beloved mother, but sadly also long forgotten, because of his father's and the evil God of Thunder's teachings about women. She smiled as he approached her and she too felt a deep stirring in her heart and belly. A passion yet unknown to her but felt in her soul from time immemorial, a physical urge to take him to the sacred wood to join with him in the ritual mating under the moonlight, when priestesses initiated men to the sacred sexual power of the earth and body. But these rites were forbidden now and the new formalities of the evil King forbade sensual pleasure. The envious God of Thunder and his priests loathed women and thought them inferior and sex was allowed only to procure new children to men, especially if they were boys, good for making soldiers or other priests. The Prince realised she was barefoot and offered her a beautiful pair of crystal shoes that fitted her perfectly… So Rhiannon forgot herself and wore the Prince's shoes, losing the connection with herself and the Mother Earth. She and the Prince, entranced by each other, started dancing and danced and danced, till everyone in the court fell asleep. Only when she realised that through her magic power and dance she had put everyone in a trance, did Rhiannon become Silver again and then Cinderella. Cinderella was scared to death. If the evil King found out what she had done he would certainly kill both her and her father; if the evil step-daughters and step-mother knew they would certainly poison her… her heartbeat was quick but not for joy and pleasure as before, but because of fear. So she ran away, her beautiful red dress immediately changed into her old Cinderella rags, she lost the crystal shoes, her carriage became an empty pumpkin, and she ran, and breathlessly ran until she reached home, hid in the cellar, where the evil trio found her pretending to still be fast asleep. They laughed and told her that in the morning the Prince would come with a crystal shoe, to see to whose lovely foot it would fit, for he was desperately in love with a stunning woman who had stolen his heart. So

they did their best, following their mother's advice to all be very clean, modest and pleasant, when the Prince arrived. The mother insisted that he should try the crystal shoe on them, even if they were very tall and had very strong big feet, fit for walking and running in the fields, as they used to do when their father was still alive and they were all contented. The Prince was a fine and nice young man and did not want to hurt the mother and her daughters' feelings, so he knelt and tried the crystal shoe on their feet. The crystal shoe, of course, did not fit. "Here", shouted the mother, "here find these scissors and cut your ugly feet, my stupid daughters, who will never marry a Prince and make me rich, safe and happy!" The Prince was looking in horror as the daughters were taking the scissors from their mother's hands in order to act out her horrid and absurd command.

Just before the girls who wanted to obey their mother's command could mutilate their feet to fit the crystal shoe, Silver arrived and shouted her step-mother's name aloud with all her might: Arianrhod, she said, Mother, what are you doing? How can you have forgotten yourself so much? Come back to yourself, wake from this horrible nightmare of fear and loss and finally be yourself again. Be the Goddess of the moon and stars, let your light and power shine fully over us and forget what the evil God of Thunder and King have inculcated with violence into your heart, brainwashing your mind with fear, pain and suffering! In the secret rituals at the Goddess's spring, Rhiannon had discovered with her growing intuition and magic skills the original sacred name of the person who had been sadly belittled and transformed into an arid and frightened woman, fighting other women, even her own daughters, in order to survive, as the evil King and God of Thunder had taught her.

Arianrhod was flabbergasted, hearing her name again after such a long time, something shook inside of her, like an earthquake, and she woke as if from a long sleep. She had lived hypnotised for years, had forgotten her true nature, self and destiny, entrapped as she was by the fear of violence from the terrible King and God of Thunder, but now her true name made her veins shake and blood run

again in her psyche, and she was filled once again with her ancient power, for names give and express power. Indeed, depriving her of her true name had been one of the ways of submission, together with fear of death and the constant beating, rape and violence she had suffered with the King. "Now I am myself again!" she shouted with a strong and powerful voice that almost scared her daughters and the Prince, who was relieved to see his beloved intervening to save the other young women from self-mutilation.

"Epona, Goddess of horses and mules, and Habontia, Goddess of abundance, harvest and prosperity, stop all this nonsense! Wake up you two, forget all that I have previously said, forget fear and find yourselves again, refuse to comply to the Prince's stupid game of power and submission. A crystal shoe to become Princess? Rubbish! You are already wonderful and powerful expressions of the Goddesses that gave you your names, you surely want a partner to share and glorify the beauty of life, but certainly not someone like this immature, spoilt son of the evil King, who believes he is more important than even his mother who gave him birth, or his future wife who will bear his children in a spiritual way, for all children are sacred and belong to the Goddess and the community who must protect and guide them into joy and laughter and love and dance! And you, my beautiful and wise Rhiannon, thank you, my dear daughter, for having kept the promise in dissolving our false evil imprisoning curse that was killing us from inside! Thank you, our dear Goddess of horses and mares, birds and the sea, travel and fertility, we all honour and acknowledge you!"

The girls, or rather the two beautiful young women, Epona and Habontia, all of a sudden opened their eyes wide and a woman's expression appeared on their faces. Epona took off the veil that was covering her beautiful dark hair that she had to hide since dark skinned and dark haired women were more dangerous and evil, according to the evil God of Thunder and King, for they were irresistible and sensual and they would easily take any man into their spires. She then laughed aloud, in a very loud way for a young woman used to repressing any signs

of joy… she showed her teeth, like a powerful panther and shook her hair loose in a freeing gesture full of beauty, joy and sensuality. Habontia too joined in that laughter, and even her eyes smiled now that she remembered her true identity and being, and suddenly all those present laughed aloud and their bellies started shaking more and more, as if taken by a powerful wind, murmuring and rumbling like water from a cascade, fresh and shiny with sunlight. Only the poor Prince was stupefied and mute and did not know what to do. Rhiannon then felt sorry for him, as he was a good young man at heart, only losing his way because of the awful teachings of the male priests and warriors of the evil God of Thunder. She took his hand, looked deeply into his eyes and smiled: "It's all right, she said, I love you. But you must learn the way of the Goddess if you want to share your life with me. You have to abandon the evil violent God of Thunder if you want to be jubilant with all our community. You must fire all your priests, put them in the fields to plough and sow the Mother Earth singing Her glories. Soon they too will forget about the fearful God of violence and dance again with us and the Goddess".

The Prince felt a tear well in his eyes. It was the first since a long long time… he remembered the salty taste and the warm comforting caress of his mother. But then his father had told him that true men never cry and he had always tried to obey him, for, you know, the King too had once been joyful and young and merry, until his family too had been destroyed by some other evil King bringing the evil violent God with his sword, and he had vowed to take revenge in a sad and seemingly endless cycle. Only Rhiannon could stop all this, as she was doing, gently and powerfully acting out this reconciliation both inside each person and in the community at large. She gently smiled again and, reading the Prince's thoughts, said: "don't you ever worry again about feeling and expressing your feelings! It is our gift form the Goddess as human beings". The Prince was really moved and nodded, unable to utter a single word. He threw off the crystal shoe, took off his princely clothes and his shoes, for it was nice he remembered, to feel the fresh air on your skin and warm earth under your naked feet, it gave you

strength, made you feel joyful, and this is all that he wanted. His riches, his glamour, his slaves, his court… it all seemed so meaningless now that he really felt his heartbeat again. He wanted to follow Rhiannon's advice, and be her man, as man to woman and God to Goddess.

Also Credne, who had silently and passively witnessed all this, was suddenly reawakened to his old self. He approved of the young man and his beautiful daughter and also saw, for the first time, how beautiful his new wife and her daughters had always been, but he had seen no more beauty since his wonderful partner Oestara had disappeared. "Oh, How I wished you were here, my beloved", he thought, but did not say it, for he did not want to spoil the happiness filling the air and hearts. "I will meet you forever in my dreams, my beloved partner. Until I too reach the other world and we can be together forever, as we promised to each other that night swimming in the beautiful calm sea under the moonlight, when I gave you the sacred ring and you gave me the sacred alchemical script that taught me my goldsmith art".

The Prince then said: "Rhiannon, I know you are a woman and a sacred priestess, please say my name aloud, so that I can be myself again and not only a stupid role in a sad game". So Rhiannon did, she pronounced his name aloud, which was full of beauty and power and joy "you are Aesun, my dear, which as you once knew means 'to be', you're the co-creator of life with me, as my beloved partner, for I am the Goddess in all her manifold forms!" Then, in a magic and sacred ritual Rhiannon says aloud the true names of those present, even of the King and his soldiers and his priests, and his evil God of Thunder, who once had been the spouse of the true Goddess but He had forgotten too, and she named also all the things; she named seas and oceans, animals and trees, fields and villages, winds and clouds, stones, woods and plants, stars and galaxies… and as she now pronounces again and again these sacred names, all things and peoples takes on a new brilliance, as if they are just being created… and indeed, this is

really what is happening all the time, for in the Goddess's joy all things are named afresh and renewed.

Rhiannon felt elated to finally see her partner Aesun in all his handsome presence… only a cloud passed her mind, "I wished mum was alive and could be here with us again, not only as the spiritual voice I hear and luminous body I see in the sacred spring, but in her physical body, so that I could again feel her hand, gently touching my hair and smiling… Oh, how I wish you were here, mum". She closed her eyes in order to pray, in her mind, and she heard Oestara's voice strong and clear saying: "Rhiannon, you have remembered and done well, I am pleased with the way you worked towards the Goddess". Silver, hearing her true sacred spiritual name from Oestara's magic voice opened her eyes again, and there, enveloped in a golden light, her magic ring on her finger, was her mother, in flesh and body, towering over them all in all her power and might. Credne could not believe his eyes, but when she embraced him with the old passion he knew all was well. And thus spoke Oestara: "This is how things must be: human beings have to live together in peace and love each other on this beautiful sacred planet Earth, manifesting abundance, equality, equanimity, love, joy, dance, sexual and sensual pleasure and spirituality. For this is how things have been for millions of years, since the time when we came from the galaxy and this is how it must and will always be. Rhiannon, I know you always loved my red mare Maeve, now you are a woman and a priestess of the Goddess, here it is for you". Maeve neighed in recognition and nodded in front of her ready to be ridden, her shining red mane floating like Rhiannon's beautiful hair in the wind.

Thus they went all together to celebrate, Rhiannon riding Maeve together with Aesun, her handsome once-upon-a-time-Prince; they were followed by everybody, everybody was singing and dancing in exultation and joy, even the evil King and the false priests, who had soon been redeemed by ploughing and sowing the sacred earth… they all forgot about the evil God of Thunder, and remembered once again that they were all children of the Earth and the Stars –

women, men, boys, girls, stones, plants, animals, all animate things belonging to the Goddess; and they all lived happily ever after, in joy, harmony, love and peace…

Amalthea Bishop Meir was born in a valley of wheat and light, she knows horses and the sea and the poetry of life.
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John Thieme

Postcolonial *Mappae Mundi*

Abstract: After a brief consideration of some of the ways in which cartography has operated through the ages, this article discusses the maps mentioned in the first part of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and references to maps in the work of three postcolonial writers: Jamaica Kincaid, Amitav Ghosh and Derek Walcott. It suggests that the postcolonial texts display a distinctive cartographical vision, which rethinks the way spaces are imaginatively constructed. Different though they are from one another, the three postcolonial writers considered particularly foreground the personal cognitive aspects of mapping and, explicitly or implicitly, challenge the totalizing, supposedly authoritative versions of world geography that characterize maps of Empire and Western cartography more generally.

After a brief consideration of some of the ways in which cartography has operated through the ages, this article discusses the maps mentioned in the first part of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and references to maps in the work of three postcolonial writers: Jamaica Kincaid, Amitav Ghosh and Derek Walcott. It endeavours to suggest that the postcolonial texts taken as case-studies display a distinctive cartographical vision, which although it is not always completely at odds with colonial map-making practices, nevertheless asserts a right to rethink the way spaces are imaginatively constructed, both locally and globally. Different though they are from one another, the three postcolonial writers considered particularly foreground the personal cognitive aspects of mapping and, explicitly or implicitly, challenge the totalizing, supposedly authoritative versions of world geography that are prevalent in maps of Empire, and in Western cartography more generally. Considering references to maps may suggest a focus on a very

particular aspect of postcolonial writing, but the writers' use of cartographical tropes offers an index of their response to colonial configurations of space and culture more generally.

To provide a context, I would like to begin by suggesting that there are two main impulses in cartographical practices through the centuries and across the globe: an approach that strives to achieve scientific accuracy and an approach that readily embraces what Edward Said, among others, has termed 'imaginative geography' (Said 1993b: 49-73). And, although these two impulses may initially seem to be mutually exclusive, they can be, and often are, twinned, since historically supposedly 'neutral' maps have invariably incorporated cultural agendas that are very specific to the world-views of the cartographers and communities who produced them. Perhaps the most famous example is Gerardus Mercator's 1569 world map, the model for all the subsequent maps that have represented the spherical earth as an oblong, with the distances between the lines of longitude expanded at the top and bottom, so that the polar regions are accorded the same amount of space across the flattened globe as the equator. Mercator-based projections have, of course, retained much of their popularity until very recently, although digital mapping such as google earth is superseding such cartography in the early years of the twenty-first century. Until then and even today, most atlases have contained world maps that are Mercator derivatives, maps that in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century heyday of Empire supplemented the cartography of Mercator and his successors with political colour coding that asserted or cemented European colonial powers' claims to non-European territory.

Mercator's Projection gives the illusion of being both authoritative and 'neutral', and certainly its landmark status as one of the greatest achievements of the golden age of Dutch cartography represents one of the two impulses identified above, the impulse towards scientific accuracy. It was produced '*ad usum navigatium*' ('for navigational use') and it was an invaluable aid for sailors,

making it more feasible for them to chart their course on a map as a straight line than had been possible using earlier Ptolemaic cartography. That said, consciously or unconsciously, Mercator's Projection has a clear Eurocentric bias, perhaps only to be expected given the context in which it was produced: the golden age of Dutch cartography coincided with the Low Countries' pre-eminence in global trade. In the sixteenth century, first Antwerp and then Amsterdam supplanted cities such as Florence and Lisbon as the most important centres of European commerce and banking, and maps were essential tools for the trading activities of the merchants of the Low Countries. They also assumed another importance at home, as they became status symbols for the Flemish and Dutch moneyed classes, who unsurprisingly saw themselves at the centre of the world. Dutch interiors, particularly the paintings of Vermeer, often have maps on their walls, maps that establish a relationship between the private domestic worlds of these interiors and the global enterprises on which their affluence was built. Cartography was, then, far more than simply utilitarian and the impulse towards scientific accuracy in such maps was paired with a view that saw them as *objets d'art*. So art and science, the interior decoration of homes and the cartographical advances underpinning the expansion of trade, appear to have cohabited comfortably in a mercantilist view of the world that naturalized the assumption that Western Europe had the right to plunder less 'civilized' parts of the globe.

By the late nineteenth-century such political cartography had progressed a long way from the comparative innocence of Mercator's Projection. And one of the most frequently cited and fascinating instances of allusions to maps in fiction from the late colonial period comes in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), a novella whose response to imperialism has, of course, elicited enough criticism to make the shelves of a library buckle under its weight (1). However, the nuances of *Heart of Darkness*'s map references have for the most part escaped detailed attention. These are subtler than has generally been appreciated and, if one notes that the references are varied and period-specific, they seem to imply a critique of

colonial cartography. The narrator Marlow's response to maps is central to the initiation he undergoes during the course of his journey into the 'heart of darkness', which is based on Conrad's own experience in the Congo in 1890, shortly after the Berlin Conference (2) had effectively licensed the institution of European-imposed borders that cut across tribal boundaries during the period of the so-called 'Scramble for Africa'. Early on in his narrative, Marlow tells his listeners:

> Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all looked that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there. […] But there was one yet – the biggest, the most blank, so to speak that I had a hankering after (Conrad 1994: 11).

In an essay written towards the end of his life, Conrad confessed to a similar addiction to maps as a boy (Conrad 1924) and, if we assume Marlow to be Conrad's approximate contemporary, it would seem reasonable to date the period in which both author and character were poring over maps as boys in the 1860s or just possibly the early 1870s (Conrad was born in 1857), or, to put this another way, prior to the Scramble for Africa and the Berlin Conference. Significantly, in the very next paragraph of his narrative, Marlow tells his listeners that a very different cartography had come into being by the time he actually undertook his journey to the place he has "hanker[ed] after". His interest to go there has been rekindled by a later map, which he has seen in a shop window in the highly significant site of Fleet Street, the centre of the British newspaper industry and, one might add, much British myth-making. In this map, he says, the blankness of the earlier map "had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness" (Conrad 1994:

11-12). Marlow remains fascinated, but now not by white blankness – the Eurocentric maps' failure to assign any clear identity to the pre-colonial space, which we recognise as Africa, though it is never named as such – but rather by the image of 'a mighty big river […] resembling an immense snake uncoiled', which, he says "fascinated [him] as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird" (Conrad 1994: 12). The suggestion is that in the intervening years, Africa has ceased to be constructed as an absence in the nineteenth-century European imagination and has been reinvented as the Dark Continent (3); and in this *colonial* cartography it is a site of primeval evil – seemingly associated with the serpent in Eden. But there is another dimension to the change that has occurred in the years that have passed since Marlow's boyhood. Africa has also become a site for colonial economic exploitation and, intent on journeying to the heart of darkness, Marlow goes to an unnamed European city, strongly redolent of Brussels, to seek employment in the service of a company trading in the "place of darkness". Here he encounters a third map and, although Conrad stops short of including the names of the nations involved, the imperialist political cartography involved here is unmistakable. In the Company's offices, Marlow sees

> a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red – good to see at any time, because one knows some real work is done in there, a deuce of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre. And the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake (Conrad 1994: 14-15).

The colour coding of this map legitimizes the way the Berlin Conference has divided Africa up into regions for European economic exploitation. Marlow naively approves the 'rainbow' coalition that the Conference has sanctioned, taking particular pride in the 'red' that denotes British influence, gently satirising the

'purple' of areas under German hegemony and indicating his own imminent implication in the 'yellow' of Belgian colonization of the Congo, which a few years after the Conference was to become a byword for cruelty, even among those who otherwise had few scruples about the ethics of imperialism (4).

In short, the maps of Marlow's boyhood, Eurocentric though they are, are comparatively innocent compared with the two that he sees shortly before his journey. Most significantly, though, his subsequent experience as he travels upriver into the African interior is completely at odds with the neat divisions of the colonial maps and exposes the reality underlying Europe's 'civilizing' mission in Africa. So the text's use of the trope of maps works as a metonym for its critique of the economic exploitation of late nineteenth-century European colonization. Colonial maps, it is suggested, are paper geography, which overwrites spatial realities. Talking more generally about space, the cultural geographer, Doreen Massey has referred to it as "the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of co-existing heterogeneity" (Massey 2005: 9), and the colonial reinscription of African space in post-Berlin Conference maps of the continent closes down the possibility of "distinct trajectories coexisting" together. *Heart of Darkness* has been criticized for its failure to represent African experience from the inside (Achebe 1988), but Marlow's map references clearly challenge the exploitation inherent in late nineteenth-century European mappings of Africa and by extension what the Tasmanian poet, James McAuley, in his poem 'Chorale', has called world maps that are "Mercator's with the hues of trade" (McAuley 1963: 6).

In this sense Conrad's implied critique anticipates later postcolonial map-making, and Mercator-based projections particularly came under attack in the 1970s and 1980s. In a number of maps published in the last quarter of the twentieth century, such as the Bligh Revised Map of the World, Australia is rescued from 'down under' mythology, by being located, often centrally, in the earth's upper hemisphere. The caption supplied with the Bligh Map says, "No longer will the

south wallow in a pit of insignificance, carrying the north on its shoulders. The south has finally emerged on top, supporting the north from above" (5). A reasonable enough readjustment, given that such privileging the north is, of course, no more than a Eurocentric convention and, after all, the term 'orientation' suggests the 'naturalness' of locating oneself by facing east.

While the Bligh Revised Map adopts a light-hearted approach, the slightly earlier Peters' Projection, which was the work of the German Marxist historian Arno Peters, is altogether more serious in tone. In his 1973 map of the world, Peters offers a more fully developed corrective to some of the Eurocentric biases inherent in projections such as Mercator's. In his view such maps magnify the surface area of countries like Greenland that are near to the poles and reduce the size of equatorial countries. His Projection rectifies this by decreasing the distance between lines of latitude towards the poles, with the corollary that the tropical regions, particularly Africa, Latin America and the Indian subcontinent, are elongated and cover a much larger surface area than in virtually all earlier projections. The Peters' Projection was attacked by traditional cartographers, who claimed it was more of a political statement than an accurate cartographical representation and in any case was not original (6); and it remains controversial, though it was adopted by various international agencies, including UNESCO, and found favour in developing countries, who responded positively to its 'area accurate' mapping. It does seem that Peters made some minor miscalculations (7), but given that Mercator's Projection and most of its derivatives not only distort the land area of countries, but also locate the equator more than half way down the map, further privileging the ascendancy of the north and specifically Europe, attacks on Peters' map seem to involve an attempt to sidestep the larger implications of its persuasive agenda.

There is something more involved here. Although the goal of achieving scientific accuracy dominated Western map-making from the Renaissance onwards and became an obsession during the period of the Enlightenment, maps,

as I hope the above remarks on their usage in the golden age of Dutch cartography illustrate, have always served multiple purposes, ranging from artworks to political tools. And in pre-Renaissance Europe, a cartographical practice in which there was scant regard for scientific accuracy was the norm. In medieval *mappae mundi* ('cloths of the world') art jostles with geometry, geography with theology, and mythology with science, to provide pictorial fables that are astonishing compendia of knowledge and beliefs about the world and humanity's place in the cosmos. In an age when illiteracy was the norm and pictorial imagery was a major factor in ensuring the laity's faith, *mappae mundi* depicted central events in Christian history, such as the expulsion from Eden and the Flood, often contrasting the pleasures of the saved with the sufferings of the damned and sometimes also serving as *memento mori*. *Mappae mundi* generally place the east rather than the north at the top and Jerusalem at their heart, with the world radiating out from this focal point and becoming increasingly barbarous around its outer limits (8). *Mappae mundi* are still centred on Europe and the Near East, and in some respects can be seen to contain the seeds of later colonial cartography, since Asia and particularly Africa, are usually represented as being inhabited by strange beings and monstrous animals, but their imaginative geography lacks the later maps' pretence of scientific accuracy. And, given that 'accuracy' has been crucial to the authority asserted by colonial cartography, it seems reasonable to see the license of *mappae mundi*'s imaginative geography – a mode of representation serving the Christian purpose of instilling faith through a mixture of information, aesthetic pleasure and threat – as a parallel pre-Enlightenment discourse to the post-Enlightenment discourse of postcolonial map-making.

In the prefatory section to her essay-collection *My Garden (book)*:, Jamaica Kincaid talks about the beginnings of her adult attachment to gardens. After relating how her first tentative attempts at horticulture failed, she gives an account

of how she began to replace parts of the front and back lawns of her American house,

> […] into the most peculiar ungardenlike shapes. These beds – for I was attempting to make such a thing as flower beds – were odd in shape, odd in relation, odd in relation to the way flower beds usually look in a garden. I could see that they were odd and I could see that they did not look like the flower beds in gardens I admired, the gardens of my friends, the gardens portrayed in my books on gardening, but I couldn't help that; I wanted a garden that looked like something I had in my mind's eye, but exactly what that might be I did not know and even now do not know (Kincaid 2000: xiii).

The catalyst for this has been her reading of William Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843), which she says made her feel her garden was "something else" (Kincaid 2000: xiii) (9), and Kincaid sees books as integral to her interest in gardens. She explains that "the garden for me is so bound up with words about the garden, with words themselves, that any set idea of the garden, any set picture, is a provocation to me" (Kincaid 2000: xiii). The essays in *My Garden (book):* are eclectic – they discuss gardens in various parts of the world, as well as commenting on larger botanical issues, such as Linnaean classification and the colonial management of the Caribbean landscape, but this notion of gardens and words being interlinked underlies Kincaid's responses to all the gardens she visits or contemplates. Gardening, she suggests, is inextricably tied up with words, a discursive practice. Her title implies this, by parenthetically adding "book" as a supplement to "Garden", almost challenging the notion that one might be able to record a garden without the mediation of a book, or even perhaps suggesting that a garden *is* a text, to be written and read in a manner akin to a book. The title, then, foregrounds the extent to which the book will be a meta-gardening work; and the awkward colon at the end, which subverts normal syntactical rules, further destabilizes the relationship between "Garden" and "book".

Kincaid's flower beds are, she says, "odd", an attempt to realise something unknown in her "mind's eye", and towards the end of the opening section of *My Garden (book):* she represents herself as lacking the sense of "an established aesthetic of a garden" (Kincaid 2000: xiv) that other gardeners have. However, the section concludes with her saying that one day she realised that what she "was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it" (Kincaid 2000: xiv). Her personal garden aesthetic was, is and, in her own terms, always will be a response to her own "immediate past". So too her book, one feels. And at this point she also reminds readers of the influence of Prescott's *History of Mexico*, now referring to it as a reminder of "the past as it is indirectly related to me" (Kincaid 2000: xiv). In short, the shapes in her garden seem to involve a very personal map-making, but one that it is inextricably bound up with Caribbean and Central American history and geography. Here and elsewhere in *My Garden (book):* her comments on gardening and the "book" that is linked with it are informed by a political cartography that is both quirkily individual and a response to the colonial past.

Later essays in the same collection are more explicit about the political backdrop to Caribbean botany. An essay entitled 'In History' contemplates the naming strategies that have fashioned both post-Columbian New World history and the plants of the Americas, as seen from the vantage point of her garden in Vermont. An essay entitled 'The Glasshouse' contrasts temperate zone greenhouses such as the one in Kew Gardens, with the Edenic Botanical Gardens of St. John's Antigua, which she has frequented as a girl, to arrive at the conclusion that botanical nomenclature has been the prerogative of those like Linnaeus who cultivated plants in glasshouses that were stocked, during the era of Dutch and British mercantile ascendancy, "at a great expense to someone else" (Kincaid 2000: 113). The link between political geography and botany is, though, at its most explicit in an essay entitled, 'What Joseph Banks Wrought'.

In 'What Joseph Banks Wrought', Kincaid contrasts English and Antiguan attitudes to landscape, finding the English "quality of character that leads to obsessive order and shape in the landscape […] blissfully lacking in the Antiguan people" (Kincaid 2000: 98). At the same time she demonstrates that botany in Antigua has mainly been a colonial preserve, not least because so much Caribbean flora and fauna has a post-Columbian history in the region (10). She provides a provenance for various plants and flowers commonly associated with the Caribbean, explaining that the bougainvillea is from tropical South America, the croton from Malaysia, the Bermuda lily from Japan, the flamboyant tree from Madagascar, the casuarina from Australia, and so on (Kincaid 2000: 100). In short, colonial trade has been responsible for bringing many typically 'Caribbean' plants to the region, and in this context, Joseph Banks, the most famous English botanist of his day, the founder of Kew Gardens and James Cook's naturalist on his first voyage to the antipodes, becomes a metonym for the transportation of produce along the trade routes of Empire. Kincaid refers to Kew Gardens as a "clearinghouse for all the plants stolen from the various parts of the world", pointing out that Banks "sent tea to India" and, most notoriously, sent the breadfruit to the West Indies from the East Indies "as a cheap food for feeding slaves" (Kincaid 2000: 101) (11).

In one sense Kincaid is here simply charting the place of plants in the traffic of Empire and underscoring the extent to which commercial trade that furthered European interests dominated the lives of Caribbean subjects to the extent that it determined the flora and fauna among which colonial Antiguans grew up. However, in addition to demonstrating the extent to which colonial transactions have been responsible for the contemporary botanical make-up of Antigua, and by extension most of the Caribbean, through the lay-out of her own garden *and* her book, she offers perspectives on botany and cartography that are as much extra-colonial as anti-colonial.

Her account of the imported nature of many Caribbean plants complements the transported situation of the early generations of the majority Afro-Caribbean population in the New World, who experienced a particular traumatic relationship to 'agriculture', since they were brought to the Americas to work as plantation slaves, but her strategy for moving beyond this is far from simply oppositional. The odd configurations she has produced in her garden serve as a trope for what she is doing both as a gardener and as a writer: they suggest a strongly felt need to articulate a highly personal cartography, albeit one that assumes a Caribbean shape. She subverts expectations of what a formal garden should be and she reinvents the genre of the gardening book.

Arguably, Kincaid's shapes, personal though they are, typify a particular strain in post-colonial literary cartography, a strain which, while it is invariably at odds with colonial mapping, is less concerned with disputing the norms of Eurocentric cartography, though it may do this, than with asserting the right to map the world individually – to move outside the imperial desire to impose precision and codification. It would be imprecise simply to equate Kincaid's garden shapes and her *Garden (book):* with the artwork of *mappae mundi*, but her imaginative horticulture involves similar modalities. Just as *mappae mundi* affirm the right to shape the world as fable, Kincaid, who can be very direct in her indictments of imperialism (12), chooses to draw personal maps. In her garden she seems to arrive at an alternative cartography intuitively; in her *Garden (book):* the process seems more conscious, but in both cases the end-product is an approach that eschews not just the agendas of colonial cartography, but the approach to mapping that has produced them.

And this is a major tendency in the *mappae mundi* that many postcolonial writers produce. They move away from colonialism, not simply by turning the world upside down like the Bligh Revised Map, or, like the Peters' Projection, questioning the proportions involved in Mercator-derived world maps' allocations of space. In an age when digital mapping is extending the possibilities for scientifically

accurate cartography into hitherto undreamt-of territory, they return us to the notion that place is imaginatively constructed. The conventions, parameters, iconography, dimensions, materials and contexts of maps, along with the media in which we encounter them – on the printed page, on a globe, on a GPS system, on a desktop computer or a cellphone – always involve cultural baggage, but a cartographical practice that openly acknowledges its subjectivity or eccentricity, or foregrounds the arbitrariness or relativism of the choices it embodies, offers a corrective to the authoritarian modes of post-Renaissance European discourse that often legitimized colonial expropriation.

Passages about maps in the work of Derek Walcott and Amitav Ghosh support the case for likening postcolonial literary cartography to *mappae mundi*. In a central section of Walcott's epic poem, *Omeros* (1990), the poet-persona who is one of the poem's protagonists, declares "I crossed my meridian" (Walcott 1990: 189) and the complex web of associations that follows this statement contains references to other meridians, specifically Greenwich and the meridian of Pope Alexander VI, who at the end of the fifteenth century decreed the line of demarcation that divided the New World between Portugal and Spain. In a passage set in post-imperial London in the same Book, the poet asks, "Who declares a great epoch?" and immediately answers, "The meridian of Greenwich" (Walcott 1990: 196). Meridians, then, come to stand for the Eurocentric metanarratives on which the mappings of the history and geography of recent centuries have been based, but the transgressive (13) crossing involved here is as much personal as political. By crossing his *own* meridian – a highly personal meridian, but one which obviously relates to and reverses the Middle Passage crossing and other voyages of Empire – the persona both steps inside the former colonizer's space and at the same time disturbs the hegemonies instated by the Greenwich meridian (14) and the earlier borderline decreed by Pope Alexander. So crossing meridians is a migrant act that dismantles the historically constructed borders that separate Caribbean space and subjectivity from Europe. And the

poem *Omeros* operates in a very similar manner throughout, confounding history with new cartographies that have their origins in the restless journeying of the Odyssean travelling protagonist. The text itself moves through a sea of discourses and, although it is rooted in the Caribbean, it expresses a postcolonial poetics of migration. Walcott's poet-persona's act of crossing meridians is in many ways similar to Kincaid's garden shapes, since it too challenges colonial demarcations of space, but where she refashions a small piece of her immediate environment, he unsettles earlier cartographies by undertaking countless *personal* journeys across arbitrarily drawn borders.

Conrad's Marlow discovers that the paper geography that came into being at the time of the Scramble for Africa instituted artificial borders, albeit borders that would have murderous consequences, such as the Nigerian Civil War, in the post-independence era. And a similar act of cartographical carnage, the Partition of Bengal, underlies the very personal stories told by Amitav Ghosh in his novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), which appears to take its title from a Conrad's similarly named novella, *The Shadow Line* (Conrad 1917). On the most obvious level, the shadow lines of the title refer to the revisionist cartography that left predominantly Hindu West Bengal in India and located the predominantly Muslim parts of eastern Bengal in East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). The lives of the narrator's Hindu family have been irrevocably affected by the institution of the political border, which, after Partition, divided Bengalis who had hitherto lived side by side. Towards the end of the novel, when members of the family are about to undertake a journey from Calcutta to their former home in Dhaka, the narrator's grandmother wants to know "whether she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane" (Ghosh 1988: 148). Ingenuous though her response is, it nevertheless foregrounds the absurdity of the map-making of the politicians responsible for Partition.

The family journeys to Dhaka to rescue an aged relative at a time of political crisis. However, this relative stubbornly refuses to uproot himself and, again

expressing himself with an apparent naivety that nevertheless has the effect of undermining the supposed wisdom of the revisionist map-makers, he expresses his sense of the absurdity of redrawing political boundaries:

> Once you start moving you never stop. That's what I told my sons when they took the trains. I said: I don't believe in this India-Shindia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere (Ghosh 1988: 211).

In the climax of this episode, the narrator ponders the deadly effects of the new border, when his second cousin, Tridib, a figure who has always exercised a particularly potent hold on his imagination, and particularly his personal mapping of place, is killed amid communal violence.

At this point, the novel seems to offer a clear indictment of political cartography, in this case a consequence of the end of colonialism – the border has come into being at the moment of Indian Independence – and Ghosh is certainly at pains to demonstrate the arbitrariness of such hastily drawn frontiers. Although the narrator concedes that the political map-makers were well-intentioned, he is struck by the fact that the bonds that link Dhaka and Calcutta are closer than ever, despite the shadow-line of the border. That said, *The Shadow Lines* remains a highly *personal* account of the narrator's family's fortunes and his growing awareness of how space is cognitively imagined by different people and communities. There is a striking instance of this towards the end of the novel, when the narrator remembers riots that have taken place in Khulna in East Pakistan in the first days of 1964. These have been triggered by the temporary disappearance of a relic, allegedly of the Prophet Mohammed's hair, from a mosque near Srinagar in Kashmir. Reflecting on these events years afterwards, in 1979, he uses his compass to draw a circle on a map in his old Bartholomew's Atlas. This circle begins with its

point in Khulna and its tip on Srinagar and the narrator is prompted to draw it by the realization that Khulna is about 1,200 miles, nearly 2,000 metres from Srinagar, "about as far from Srinagar as Tokyo is from Beijing or Moscow from Venice or Washington from Havana, or Cairo from Naples" (Ghosh 1988: 226), and when he draws it, he finds he has covered an area that includes places as far apart as "the Pakistani half of Punjab […] Kandy, in Sri Lanka, [and] the Yangtze Kiang, passing within sight of the Great Wall of China". This palimpsest – his circle overwrites the geography of the atlas's map – strikes him as "remarkable", but he also feels it is an exercise in "learning the meaning of distance" (Ghosh 1988: 227). And it leads him to draw another circle, another palimpsest, in his atlas. This time he places Milan at the centre, and places 1,200 miles away from it on the circumference. He says:

> This was another amazing circle. It passed through Helsinki in Finland, Sundsvall in Sweden, Mold in Norway, above the Shetland Islands, and then through a great empty stretch of the Atlantic Ocean until it came to Casablanca. Then it travelled into the Algerian Sahara, through Libya, into Egypt, up through the Mediterranean, where it touched on Crete and Rhodes before going into Turkey, then on through the Black Sea, into the USSR, through Crimea, the Ukraine. Byelorussia and Estonia, back to Helsinki (Ghosh 1988: 227-228).

All these places are as close to Milan as Khulna is to Srinagar and yet, even in an increasingly globalized world, their destinies are less umbilically linked.

In one sense the narrator's palimpsests simply involve an overwriting of the political geography of his Bartholomew's Atlas, and so one might say that they simply contest a form of late colonial cartography – and of course they do just this – but making Khulna and Milan the central points of the circles leads to the creation of two very individual *mappae mundi*, in some ways analogous to medieval cartographers placing Jerusalem at the centre their maps (or Imperial

Rome according Rome, not Milan, centrality in many of *its* maps), but it is more subjective here because the circles are products of the narrator's own personal imagination. *The Shadow Lines* is a novel that depicts traumatic political events that have their origins in colonial cartography, but like Kincaid's garden shapes and Walcott's persona's crossing meridians, the narrator's two circles create an imaginative geography that is uniquely his own.

NOTES

(1) See, e.g. Said 1993a, Thieme 2001, Collits 2005, Caminero-Santangelo 2005 and Farn 2005. Also Knowles and Moore 2000, particularly the entries on 'colonialism' (77-80) and 'race/racism' (336-338).

(2) The Berlin Conference was in fact a series of meetings held between November 1884 and February 1885 under the chairmanship of Germany's Chancellor Bismarck and attended by representatives of various European nations, the USA and Turkey. It allocated European powers particular 'spheres of influence' in Africa and in so doing both legitimized European appropriations of African territory and provided a framework for the further partitioning of the continent, so that by 1914 most of Africa was under European control.

(3) Prior to this, the discursive construction of Africa as bestial or hellish has a long genealogy in European cartography. See my comment on its representation in *mappae mundi* in this article. However, Marlow sees absence as having been replaced by darkness in the years in question and Conrad's use of his persona suggests he represents an aspect of the late Victorian imaginary that was becoming more aware of Africa.

(4) Through bilateral agreements with other European powers in the 1880s, King Léopold II of Belgium obtained overall control of the Congo basin, an area that came to be known as the Congo Free State. The region was intended to be a free trade area, in which slavery was forbidden. However, during the succeeding years,

Léopold effectively established a private fiefdom, in which slavery was rife, and his economic exploitation of the Congo led to the death of a large proportion of its population. As news of atrocities in the Congo filtered through to Europe, public opinion was outraged. From one point of view, *Heart of Darkness* can be read as a contribution to the attack on the particular brutality of Léopold's form of imperialism.

(5) Quoted from the 1980s Bligh Revised Map of the World. N.p.: Bligh Group of Companies. N.d. McArthur's Universal Corrective Map of the World, published in 1979, is said to be the first modern 'south-up' map. A much earlier 'upside down' map was created in Dieppe by Nicolas Desliens in 1566. http://flourish.org/upsidedownmap/. Accessed 30 December 2011.

(6) They attempted to discredit it by claiming that a Scotsman, James Gall, had devised a similar map in the nineteenth century. Harwood 2006: 172.

(7) See Harwood 2006: 172-175.

(8) Among the most famous are the Hereford Cathedral *mappa mundi*, believed to be the largest surviving such map, and the Ebstorf world map, reconstructed from photographs in the convent of Ebstorf in Lower Saxony, after being destroyed in a World War II bombing raid. See Barber (ed.) 2005: 58-61; and Harwood 2006: 39-42.

(9) The passage specifically mentions Prescott's references to the marigold, dahlia and zinnia.

(10) Cf. Senior 1995: *passim*, but particularly the opening poem, 'Meditation on Yellow' (11-18).

(11) She continues by reminding readers that the breadfruit "was in the cargo that Captain Bligh was carrying to the West Indies on the *Bounty* when his crew so correctly mutinied" (Kincaid 2000: 101).

(12) See particularly Kincaid 1988.

(13) As Tim Cresswell points out, 'crossing lines' is the literal meaning of transgression (Cresswell 2004: 103).

(14)See my discussion in Thieme 1999: 157-158.

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Vimala Rama Rao

The Fiction of Bolwar Mahamad Kunhi

Abstract: Bolwar Mahamad Kunhi is a distinctive voice in Kannada writing of the last quarter century. What is remarkable about his writing is that he writes as a locally rooted Indian who has an intimate knowledge of his background, the Muslim way of life. What his fiction brings out is that people need an anchor in life and they look to religion for sustenance. Bolwar has an equally close knowledge of the way traditional Brahmins live and his portrayal of the inter-face between completely different ways of life is startlingly true and refreshing.

Bolwar Mahamad Kunhi's short stories (1) are like a breath of fresh air in Kannada Literature for more than one reason. Firstly his stories deal with Muslim life in rural India lived in close contact with people of other persuasions, and the texture and feel of such an existence. Secondly while there have been Muslim names in the Kannada literary world which can be counted on the fingers of one hand (mystics and poets included), hardly anyone prior to Bolwar had explored the inner world woven of moral, ethical and social concerns that are peculiar to the Muslim way of life. This is not to say that Bolwar is a Muslim writer but to highlight the fact that he writes from the background of a section of the people of Karnataka whose voice was absent from the concourse of voices claiming attention in the world of letters. In 1973 Bolwar's writing first made an appearance in print. "Those who for the sake of power and consequence in the world, with only the evidence of their eyes and ears, mindlessly quote the Holy Koran, make them stand on the burning coals of hell". This was a voice totally different from all the others clamouring for attention. Bolwar's fiction makes no protest against marginalization, exploitation, lack of opportunities, oppression by the majority community, corruption in political

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life, and such other hackneyed themes. He is also refreshingly free of the habit of flogging the dead horse of the caste system. In his fiction the wretched of Independent India appear often, pursuing their traditional occupations, making fools of themselves, showing kindness and consideration to others, getting duped by charlatans – in short, leading ordinary lives without the obligatory mark of Cain on their foreheads that many Kannada writers feel it their duty to display. In most of his stories, a human being is confronted with a situation where conventional wisdom, whether it is religiously sanctioned or socially acceptable, does not answer. In one of his finest stories "A Piece of Wall" there are two themes running parallel, a desperately poor widow hoping to build a roof over her head and a prosperous jeweller's son who gets sucked into the Babri Masjid demolition plot in 1992. The word "wall" acquires resonances echoing through the prayer halls of mosques and temples everywhere in the world. The question at the end of the story is – can anyone demolish the sense of the sacred in a human heart? Does the demolition of a mosque erase India's Muslim heritage? Can such an act of covert political vandalism destroy the fabric of trust and mutual dependence that Indians of different religions, living together for centuries have built up? Bolwar does not raise these questions, he trusts the tale to tell the reader what it has to say. In the starkness of its existential position the story reminded me of Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" I had read this story in Kannada as an eight year old and it has stayed with me ever since as a measure of things. Whatever the story may have lost in translation from Russian into English and then into Kannada, it still delivered a powerful wallop. As Pushkin said "Translators are the post-horses of civilization". Very often translation into another language transforms a text in ways unforeseen by author or translator. Bolwar's stories are deeply rooted in the soil of his native coastal Karnataka and his Kannada is a dialect of that region replete with words from other Dravidian languages, mainly Tulu and Konkani. Add to it the Arabic of the sacred texts of Islam and the Urdu spoken by Muslims in India and the Sanskrit words without which prayers in Kannada to any God cannot be

addressed. Bolwar's fictional world is by and large located in a small village called Mutthuppadi about 40 miles from the port city of Mangalore. This village he has peopled with men and women of varying backgrounds – rich mill-owning Muslim merchants, boys selling fish in baskets on a bicycle, Brahmin scholars, skilled jewellers, canny officials, young men dreaming of the Gulf, beautiful teenage girls destined for impotent or short-lived or inhibited husbands or worse, eyed by respectably married lechers – to name but a few. Bolwar's stories do not sport a fashionable message or a politically correct ideology. The stories are told as stories, interesting because they are about flesh and blood human beings trying to survive in an uncertain world, where the only anchors available are in religion, custom and ceremony. A good many of Bolwar's stories are titled with concepts from Islam. These concepts are guide-posts, not necessarily tickets to heaven. In the story named "Iddat" a beautiful young widow who had been married to an impotent old man, spends the stipulated period of mourning in isolation, austerity and prayer. Islam allows remarriage. The young and attractive man who was her husband's right hand, is staying in the house and taking care of the business. The old lady who is the husband's sister, has ensured this. On the day Iddat ends, the girl learns that he is to marry and bring home a daughter-in-law to her. Whose decision this is, we do not learn. The girl becomes a mother-in-law without having been a wife or a mother. The story ends with a prayer for punishment that she intones silently, for having dared to hope. There is no room for sentimentality in his stories. They do not drip with synthetic pity for the 'oppressed classes'. The treatment of the very poor who think up a ruse to get extra rations and end up having to pay a tithe has the same gentle humour as that of the comfortable, salaried people trying to stir communal trouble in another story. Bolwar's handling of the pathetic calls to mind Nabokov's technique of presenting the essentially tragic Pnin in a comic perspective, leaving it to the reader to arrive at her/his own conclusions. The aging Musliar who reads the Khutub in the masjid on Fridays and is supported by the community which gives him food everyday of the month in one

of the houses of the members, suffers from toothache and has lost several teeth. His reading of the Khutub is affected by this and some younger, Gulf-returned men want to remove him. Musliar has no other means of earning a living. The one influential, wealthy member of the congregation who can speak for him, keeps him waiting for hours and does not deign to see him. The mortified man walks out, braving the ferocious Dobermans in the yard, to face a bleak and uncertain future, but rejecting the false values of the mill-owner ("Jannat").

In a story called "Anka" Bolwar's narrator discusses all the inherent possibilities a situation provides by way of choice. An old, poor Muslim woman has two sons, the older is away on his own, the younger is hard put to make a living in the village. Someone offers him a job if he agrees to become a Hindu. Later he falls ill and is in hospital. His mother goes to see him but does not know his present name. Both communities are in a ferment as to who is to claim the corpse for burial/cremation and how. The Moulvi mildly suggests that they can pray for his recovery. The narrator looks at the various options open to him. The scene between the estranged mother and son could be a great tear-jerker. But in the story the boy recovers, killing all the melodramatic variants to the story. His mother returns to her village.

Bolwar does not dwell on the obvious. Any Kannada commercial movie script-writer can do it. What is important to him is the question of *Swadharma*. We need the word *Dharma* desperately in today's world which is getting increasingly complex day by day. *Dharma* roughly means "the right way to be/act". *Swadharma* is what is right conduct for an individual in a given situation, which can have endless variables. A story from the *Upanishads* illustrates this: a hermit in the forest sees an exhausted man running from his pursuers, who seeks his help. The hermit hides him in a cave. When the King's soldiers come and question him he answers truthfully. The fugitive is captured and taken away. What is the right thing for him to do? Refuse to hide a suppliant? Lie to the soldiers? And he an ascetic,

sworn to truth and purity. He has to make a choice between humanity and detachment and he makes the wrong choice.

Most people live on the teetering edge of such choices. Religion and conventional wisdom offer guidelines but they are often too simplistic to be of much use. In a story about a boy who sold fish, Bolwar has a Brahmin astrologer to whom the boy comes before he undertakes a bigger venture. The astrologer knows that he is a very hard-working honest person and is looking forward to this. He gives him his good wishes and tells him that only those who are dissatisfied with the present need to know the future and since he had made his plans already, he should go ahead. The new venture is short-lived: the old car the young man had bought has an accident and he escapes with minor injuries. But is the astrologer who is hit hardest. He falls into a state of stunned silence and total passivity. The most enjoyable part of the story is the speculation among the townspeople who swear by the accuracy of his predictions, and cannot understand why he did not warn the boy. A month later three of them decide to go to see him. The stony astrologer's wife tells them that he is waiting for the boy to ride by on his bicycle. Even as they stand there, the prediction comes true.

The aged astrologer's sense of failure comes from his being unable to determine his *Swadharma*. He opted for worldly wisdom and common sense. Would warning the boy have been a better thing to do? Who knows?

Many of Bolwar's stories show how neither religion nor conventional thinking come to the help of a person in a moral dilemma. In one story a very poor Hindu woman who was forced to be a prostitute, hears a former customer speaking of her nubile daughter. She forbids her to go out of the house. A little later some of the village worthies come to her offering to help her with the police as her daughter has been abducted by a Muslim boy and married. She tells them she sent the girl with him. Bolwar does not go into the depiction of people's mental states as a narrator, except when it serves a comic purpose. The pathetic and the tragic are left to find their resonance in the reader's imagination.

There are two aspects of Bolwar's writing that appeal to me particularly: the first is the stratum of Indian society that he writes about, poor people in a small village who face life without any props and who confront genuine human problems. Secondly the social fabric that he depicts is authentically Indian, composed of a mosaic of different religions, castes, occupations and interests but living in mutual trust and respect. Even in the years following the Babri Masjid demolition when communal clashes are regularly organized by politicos, very often the affected people prefer to sort it out themselves without outside interference. After all Muslims are Indians who have lived here for centuries along with everybody else and no one thought of them as outsiders. It is this authentic reality that Bolwar's fiction reflects.

When the rest of the world is equating Islam with violence, there is a country where that religion is practised accommodating freedom, tolerance, a progressive outlook and respect for the rights of others. India rarely gets credit for any of its positives: how many Holocaust historians even mention India as a country that welcomed Jews and gave them privileges? India is associated exclusively with poverty and the caste system. Many of the Indian writers currently writing in English have mostly seen the country through a telescope. Regional literatures are engaged with their readership and have a vigorous life. It is so in Kannada. Bolwar is an unusual and exceptionally sensitive writer whose fiction embodies the texture of life as it is lived in this vast and multi-layered country.

NOTES

(1) Bolwar Mahamad Kunhi has eight short story collections, one novel, two stage plays and six children's books to his credit, besides several other editorial works. He was conferred three Sahitya Academy Awards in Karnataka State, and has also won National Awards for his contribution to Kannada Films. His works have been translated into other Indian languages.

Vimala Rama Rao was Professor in the Department of English, Bangalore University until 2005. She was a British Council Scholar at the University of Wales (UK) and a Fulbright Fellow at Harvard University (USA). Her Doctoral work was on the fiction of Vladimir Nabokov. She has presented papers in several international conferences in Russia and Sweden. Her published works include a book on F. Dostoevskij (1982) and a collection of critical essays entitled *Of Walls and Women* (2000). She has published a critical survey of Indian Women's Writing in English (1977) in Kannada, and also translates from Kannada into English.

Igor Maver

Slovenian Diasporic Literature: The Case of Jože Žohar

Abstract: The article thematically and stylistically analyzes the verse written by the Slovenian migrant poet from Australia, Jože Žohar, in the Slovenian language, which has only been published in Slovenia. The poet shows a great gift for poetic experimentation and tries to reconcile in himself the dividedness between the two "Homes", Slovenia and Australia.

Born in 1945, Jože Žohar has been living in Australia since 1968. As a contemporary Slovenian migrant poet (Maver 2002), Žohar experiments with the potential of the Slovenian language and constantly tries to expand the borders of his world and language by transcending traditional poetic aesthetics and through linguistic self-awareness. Žohar's verse written in Slovenian is characterised by linguistic experimentation using palindromes, alliterations, vocal colouring, puns, homonyms and ornamental adjectives, as well as lexical and syntactic play.

He could also be described as a migrant poet from the Prekmurje region, for *genius loci* is of great importance in his verse: the Prekmurje region on the one hand (the plain and the hills of the Goričko region in Slovenia bordering with Hungary and Austria), and Australia (the arid bush) on the other. In all three collections of his poetry, an element which is present strongly is the specific geographical environment, which appears in a dual relation: on the one side the poet's native Prekmurje and Goričko, and on the other the Australian landscape.

Jože Žohar published quite a few of his poems in the Slovenian press as well as the migrant press in Australia. But it was only in 1990 that his first collection of poems in the Slovenian language, *Aurora Australis*, appeared in Slovenia, which became an independent European country only in 1991 after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. In an interview Žohar made it clear that he did not approve of

the division into a physical and a spiritual migration, for "a physically displaced Slovenian is at the same time also a spiritually displaced Slovenian". He chose exile primarily for social-economic and not for political reasons, unlike many of the Slovenian migrants who left immediately after the Second World War to go to Argentina, Canada, and also Australia.

Despite the displacement and dividedness that characterize Žohar's *Aurora Australis*, he nonetheless deals with the migrant's sense of estrangement in the new world, his search for a true mother country and, interestingly, a possible acceptance of the new land, Australia. In an earlier poem written and published in English ("Let's Go Home"), after the description of the migrant's suffering, the lines towards the end unexpectedly suggest an identification of the Sydney suburb Penrith with a new home. Home is capitalised and accepted by the speaker as a new reality:

> In our quiet, great desire,
> In hidden suffering we burn.
> Maybe after all
> Somehow, someday
> To the land of our birth
> We'll finally return.
> But there's the beauty
> Of the Blue Mountains that we have
> Yet to see, and to discover. […]
>
> With new zeal
> From the sadness we shall sustain,
> And agree: "Let's return to Penrith.
> Let us go Home! (Žohar 1981)

Žohar's collection of verse *Aurora Australis* features the poetic cycle entitled "Apple Poems", written during a sleepless night in a motel in Orange in April of 1987. They transcend the typical migrant nostalgia and again reflect the poet's erotic relationship with his homeland, tinged with thoughts on death. The external flight is replaced, and thus balanced, by the withdrawal into an 'inner exile' that remains laden with existential anguish: "We are drowning, drowning, oppressed and twisted, deafened by the howl inside […]" (Žohar 1990: 25). These poems are characterised by unusual tropes, paradoxical comparisons and very private symbolism. An apple as the symbol of 'Slovenianness' has turned into mere apple-skins, Australia having squeezed out all its juices of life. Elsewhere, only sour, sulphured wine remains, as in the poem "We Are Apple-Skins". Žohar's stream-of-consciousness technique enables him to make ample use of private hermetic symbols which are difficult to decode. "Apple Poems" also point to the multiple alienation of the speaker of the poems (geographical, personal, social). The "black sister" which appears in some of the poems metaphorically stands for the night, death or a prostitute, with an Eros-Thanatos relationship firmly in place. The poet contends that there is no easy or relaxed erotic connection between man and woman, but rather a constant mutual self-denial and fear, a search for something else, a fear of spiritual chaos and hallucinations caused by separation. Frequent sound effects and typography, not devoid of semantic significance, show the poet's postmodern *penchant*.

It all betrayed me.
Even the sun and the sky.
Through a blind pane the black sister
Stares black into my Eye…

APPLE-TREES MIGRATE with overripe faces
Into my dreams that are for me by the town of Orange.

THE APPLE WIND from the apple ships
Is breaking through the cracks of the tired windows.
The galleon oars are rowing into darkness.
Oh, Man, why are we so alien to each other,
Why is there no Sybilla, no words among us? […]

WE ARE APPLE-SKINS and nothing can save us.
The black sister squeezes us black
Among the apples in the green press (Žohar 1990: 26).

The Eros-Thanatos relationship is clearly recognisable in the final stanzas of the twelve-poem cycle "Apple poems", where night, death, the poet's mistress, and by extension his homeland, all metaphorically merge into one:

SATISFY ME, oh Night! Make me
A statue, a beam, something
That knows no nightmares and peaceful dreams.
But you are growing pale, retreating from the room!
Far behind the mountains you take off your clothes,
The black robe, and you are white. You are hope.
You are faith (Žohar 1990: 27).

The second part of *Aurora Australis* in particular shows the poet's predilection for linguistic experimentation in the fields of Slovenian lexicon and syntax, which is difficult to render in English translation. He is, for example, fond of homonyms, synonyms, phonetic intensifications; he deftly uses onomatopoeia, occasionally adds alliterations, internal rhymes, assonance, interlocking and end-rhymes. The poetic cycle "Mourning Poems", is still tinged by the hue of sometimes pathetic migrant nostalgia. The speaker of these poems longs for a spiritual and physical *néant* and laments the fact that he shall forever try in vain to return home:

> Only you shall never sleep
> In these beds between the furrows,
> Your own with your people.
> You are too far. A disconnected joint.
> In vain searching for the way back (Žohar 1990: 66).

As a migrant poet in Australia Jože Žohar finds himself in a double exile; as an emigrant from his native country and as an artist, thus by definition an outsider in society at large. His verse has nevertheless managed, metaphorically, to span two continents, Europe and Australia. He has found a striking balance between his memories of the old country, Slovenia, and the experiences in the new country, Australia, with an emphasis on the characteristic Australian landscape, this paramount Australian literary trope. In contrast to many other migrant poets, there is no place for pathetic, maudlin melancholy in *Aurora Australis*. The two elements causing schizoid displacement in his verse are geographical distance and the poet's past. Hence his constant departures and returns create an impression of the transitoriness of life:

> Every time I come back, there are fewer warm hands,
> Ready to be shaken.
> And there are more and more of those
> Who cannot recall me.
> At least I know how I fade into nothingness […]
> And southerly wind blows
> Over white bones (Žohar 1990: 40).

In his very first collection of poems, *Aurora Australis*, Jože Žohar states that he does not acknowledge the division between a "physical" and "spiritual" migration, since the two appear to him complementary, never appearing separately. He

feels "dis-placed" and never "trans-placed", remaining a cultural hybrid, half Slovenian and half Australian, which in his case represents a sort of homelessness (see Maver 1992).

Žohar's second collection is called *Veku Bukev* (Žohar 1995, *To the Crying of Beeches*), which can mean a chronological definition of his youth spent among the beeches but also crying after it; that is, an ode to a Proustian "time lost", time spent among the reeds, poplars and beeches. Geographical locale is again of prime importance in the book and it appears in the typical dichotomic relationship: the Prekmurje and the Australian bush country are constantly contrasted and juxtaposed. This second collection of the poet's verse represents his attempt to identify Australia as his new home; yet Žohar remains caught 'in between' and sings to the Australian "harem of camels in the desert, tombstones under the eucalypt trees, the waves broken on the shore, kangaroos, run away from bush fires" (Žohar 1995: 29; my translation). Žohar revives alliterative verse, amply uses paronyms (words that are identical but have a different meaning in a changed context) and palindromes (that can be read fowards and backwards and may have the same or a different meaning), amasses numerous homonyms, synonyms and uses onomatopoeia. As in his first collection *Aurora Australis*, Žohar still remains set asunder in the pain between Eros and Thanatos, between the erotic experience of the homeland, Slovenia, and a wish for a physical and spiritual nothingness in the vicinity of death that can only bring 'salvation'. This dichotomy also accounts for the poet's ambivalent attitude towards his homeland, which on the one hand urges him to become erotically involved with it and also makes him suffer, triggering off a wish for death for abandoning it.

An element that is very apparent in Žohar's new collection is a specific geographic environment, which again appears in a typically dichotomous relationship: on the one hand there is the poet's native Prekmurje and Goričko, the river Mura, and on the other the Australian desert landscape. They are being constantly juxtaposed in his verse. In his melancholy, the poet is constantly

returning home and at the same time biding farewell to it: he wants to be "one in the two, to be there and to be here", which he finds a special privilege that excites him (Žohar 1995: 9). However, it is not that he thus finds himself in a sort of schizophrenic divided position, he who describes himself as "an excited galley-slave between Scyla and Charybdis"? (Žohar 1995: 29). Žohar's displacement and geographic schizophrenia never become a self-centred, pathetic tearful lamentation and weeping. The poetic account of Žohar's migrant experience is clearly enough set into the Slovenian-Australian context, although it could represent any migrant or exilic experience.

The collection structurally consists of four cycles, each of which comprises several sections or units, which could only conditionally be called stanzas, for the poems are written in free verse, with occasional embracing and internal rhymes. Not only does he experiment with typography (for example, in the verse sections "*a mar rama*" and "*mure erum*"), sound colouring and ballad characteristics, but also tries to revive the old Germanic alliterative verse, which is an important novelty in contemporary Slovenian poetry.

Žohar uses sophisticated paronymes (cognate words) and palindromes (see Eckler). His experimentation with words, the changing of individual letters in them, which completely changes the meaning, the poetic description of his stream-of-consciousness represent a significant development in contemporary Slovenian poetic expression. The surprising introduction of alliteration into contemporary Slovenian poetry is perhaps the result of Žohar's knowledge and attachment to the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic accentual-syllabic metrical system. The palindromic arrangement of letters and the search for new or similar meanings, lexical and syntactical experimentation, synonyms and onomatopoeic sound colouring, places him among successful Slovenian verse experimenters.

In the first poetic cycle of the collection *Veku bukev* titled "Emigrants" Žohar asks himself about the motives of Slovenian migrants to go and live in Australia "by the muddy rivers", "in the snowy Mountains" or on the sugar cane plantations of

Northern Queensland (Žohar 1995: 6). In Žohar's descriptions Nature is completely indifferent to the fate and life of an individual, a migrant – "the beeches in the Panonian marshes do not care" (Žohar 1995: 6). The poet is "an erring figure", the Prodigal Son who has to write his poems, odes to "the time of beeches that is no more", which turn out to be elegies (Žohar 1995). The last part of this artistically effective cycle is partly surrealistic and full of painful awareness of the approaching old age. The second cycle of the collection, "To the Time of Beeches", establishes Žohar's life paradox: "To grow there. To grow up here".

"I Am in Between, I Am in Between", the third cycle of the collection, is the longest one. The speaker suffers because he is split between the two countries, Slovenia and Australia, he is "in between", "a mixture, a conglomerate of both, the blood of the blood of generations, departed beyond their boundaries" (Žohar 1995: 35). He is aware of his flight that has found expression in "crying" from "the time of beeches", which opens itself as a spiral and at the same time it closes and collapses within. The attitude of the poet towards his homeland is very telling: in his first collection the erotic relationship man-woman comes to the fore, while in *Veku bukev* it is complemented with the relationship ("old") baby-("ancient") mother.

The collection ends by the fourth cycle, "The Dry Shadow-time", which is not set in the Australian setting by coincidence. This is the environment where the poet now lives, "the kind second home, surrounded by the power of oceans" (Žohar 1995: 44). The cycle is actually dedicated to Australia, which in his eyes is a dry, deserted and empty "stolen continent" (Žohar 1995: 45). There is a biblical allusion to the savior – "him who shun the grave" (Žohar 1995: 45), who is to return "from the sky". But according to the poet, the saviour is not going to arrive there, "there will be no sky with clouds above the poor consumed by fire". The ironic label "Lucky country" refers to the description of a kind of hell, where the Australian Aborigines live. They are identified with the land, which represents for them "a bowl of memory" and is no hell to them (Žohar 1995: 47). Žohar envies them, for in contrast to him, the migrant, they are on their own piece of land and they feel at

one with it, with "the land into which they are cursed" (Žohar 1995: 47). How to win over time and transience in the dead, dried-out country? This question, too, is posed by the poet himself and he answers it by describing a metaphysical search in a love act between two people, who "pant into the sky and the earth, who hold back, prolong the moment" (Žohar 1995: 48), with which they would at least for a moment experience this illusion. Just as the black Aborigine blows the memory of ancient times into his *didgeridoo*, the poet at the end of the poetic cycle cries out for darkness and water for the dried-out land. It should drink till it is drunk, which he himself also desires: to forget.

Žohar's most recent verse collection *Obiranje Limon* (Žohar 2004, Lemon-picking) shows that he has remained true to his bold linguistic experimentation. As a migrant he constantly tests the borders of Slovenian poetic expression, and in this book for the first time he uses rhythmical prose, representing the dark inventory of the poet's life via the metaphorics of lemon-picking in Australia. This rhythmical prose or poems in prose also represent some sort of reconciliation with the anguish of a migrant abroad and the significance of 'homeland', reflected in "Wanderings" for an emigrant as "one of us, displaced, with home away from home. *Jernej*. *Domen*. The tenth child. And much more" (Žohar 2004: 49; my translation). Žohar intimately yet only partly accepts Australia as his new homeland, because as a migrant he remains constantly displaced (Maver 2004). He sees his life as an endless process of saying good-bye and himself as the prodigal son, who tries to find his peace but also finds poetic inspiration. In "Complaints, Conciliations" he writes:

> Where you are now, there is June, when lemons and oranges become ripe, time when you leave all behind and everybody leaves you behind, because you want it like this for a change. For you know full well that among lemon-trees sensually rich poems happen too. Find yourself shelter among them (Žohar 2004: 29; my translation).

The poet's new collection of poems *Obiranje Limon* contains seven cycles or thematic clusters: "At Home! At Home! At Home! (The Two of Us)", "Symposion", "From Apple-tree Orchards", "Indian Fragments", "Lemon-picking", "Nameless", and "Word Anguishes".

"Lemon-picking" consists of lengthy poems in prose, and the cycle "Nameless" features puns and linguistic experimentation. Žohar's poems in rhythmical prose are a new form for him, where he shows his essential dividedness between the two "Homes" in "Lemon-picking":

> From the Blue Mountains, when they dwell cold in silence or when they speak out in fire.
> From the house which is the home of Home. From eucalypts,
> magnolia. From fences and walls between wordless neighbours.
> From new roots. Yes: from new roots. You feel: there is no more of you with each new coming back. You bite into a ripe lemon,
> Suck out its juice. The tongue pricks you. The tongue that is called […].
> You feel like crying (Žohar 2004: 35; my translation).

The cycle titled "Indian Fragments" represents an important novelty in Žohar's poetic opus, although certain references to Buddhism (or Hinduism in his most recent collection) can already be found in the collection *Veku Bukev*. In "Pilgrimages", Man's anguish at the realisation of his own transience suddenly strikes the poet – a Man, a migrant, as Everyman and as a pilgrim through life – as less dense and pressing during his visits to India, for he seems to be able to find a way out of it in an after-life voyage and search for a new life after death:

> Scented flames,
> O, bright flames of cremation,
> Anoint the body that through you

Offers itself to the gods.
There is the time of search and migration.
All the destinations and terminals are also the returns
(Žohar 2004: 18; my translation).

It is interesting that the speaker's experience and thinking about life (abroad) ends with a certain projection into the future, into what is for him a more 'neutral' locale and culture, India – not Slovenia and not Australia. India represents for him, physically and symbolically, 'something in-between', the phrase he uses to describe himself in a previous collection, a Slovenian migrant to Australia ("Pilgrimages", "For Indira", and "Vishnu"). Jože Žohar's *Obiranje Limon* connects descriptions of Man's existential anguish with questions of migration.

Contemporary theory of diasporic literature perceives Home as several locales, liberated of the spatial concept of location, which is at the same time deeply embedded in the cultural memory of a migrant and her/his own personal biography (cf. Fludernik). In Jože Žohar's poetry this double allegiance, dis-placement, trans-placement and the fluid diasporic identity show his dynamic global view and represent the source of an original and assured artistic inspiration.

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Paolo Calabrò

Le cose fuori di sé. La metafisica relazionale di Raimon Panikkar come creazione continua

Abstract I: La metafisica relazionale di Raimon Panikkar, centrale per la comprensione dell'opera del filosofo catalano ma poco approfondita nei suoi testi, soprattutto nelle sue più avanzate implicazioni, presenta suggestivi punti di contatto con la teoria medievale della "*creatio continua*", a sua volta vicina a posizioni buddhiste tradizionali e scientifiche contemporanee. Da questi accostamenti emerge con rinnovata forza il convincimento ontologico fondamentale di Panikkar: la "cosa in sé" non esiste, perché le cose, a ben vedere, sono "fuori di sé", nello spazio aperto delle relazioni reciproche.

Abstract II: Even if the Raimond Panikkar's relationship-based metaphysic is poorly treated in his writings – particularly concerning its deepest significance – it represents the "gold key" to comprehend the whole work of the Catalan philosopher. It shows interesting similarities with the "*creatio continua*" medieval theory, that is in turn in touch with some traditional Buddhist views and some recent scientific conceptions. A comparison between these apparently different doctrines supports the main ontological Panikkar's idea: nothing exists "inside itself", since things live "outside of themselves" into the open space of mutual interactions.

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Introduzione

Nel pensiero del filosofo catalano Raimon Panikkar (1) ricorre il tema della creazione, non tanto in riferimento all'origine materiale di tutte le cose, quanto piuttosto alla facoltà dell'uomo di "creare l'inedito", di dar luogo a un mondo svincolato dalle ferree leggi della necessità. Questa facoltà, direttamente collegata alla libertà (si ricordi che, per Panikkar, la libertà non è solo una nozione né un mero attributo, bensì una delle tre dimensioni della sua visione cosmoteandrica della realtà (2)), non è tuttavia una prerogativa dell'uomo, ma di tutto ciò che è (in quanto appartenente al complesso cosmoteandrico: in più di un'occasione Panikkar ha parlato della facoltà creatrice *della materia* e perfino *del pensiero* – asserendo che "il pensiero modifica il pensato" al punto da conferire a quest'ultimo nuove possibilità di essere – ovvero *della parola* – tanto da intitolare un suo saggio "La parola creatrice di realtà" (3)); altrove, ha affermato che le relazioni creano *nuovi mondi*:

> se prendiamo sul serio l'interculturalità, non è che gli indiani, gli aztechi, i maya abbiano un'altra concezione del mondo – del nostro mondo, naturalmente, quello che è cominciato col big-bang e finirà non so come – vivono addirittura in un altro mondo. Non è una diversa concezione dell'universo, è un universo differente. Se non si arriva fino a questo punto, credo che si rimanga ancora prigionieri delle nostre prospettive monistiche o del criptokantismo che domina in tutta la cultura moderna e tecnocratica attuale, e non solo occidentale: c'è una "cosa in sé", cioè il mondo, sconosciuto evidentemente, di cui ciascuno ha poi la sua visione. Questa concezione è falsa: ci sono mondi diversi, universi differenti. Questo conflitto di kosmologie è la causa ultima della crisi attuale. Con una sola cosmologia, una sola concezione dell'universo, e quindi dell'uomo, non si può far fronte alle sfide attuali, non perché la mia concezione dell'uomo (l'essenza uomo, ancora una volta l'astrazione platonica) sia falsa, ma perché la realtà, in se stessa, è ancora più reale. E per il fatto di essere reale io non la posso

> cogliere. Se la potessi cogliere dovrei situarmi fuori della realtà, ma questa sarebbe allucinazione (4).

Provando a dirlo in termini sintetici: la realtà è fatta di relazioni. In quanto queste relazioni avvengono (si costituiscono, perdurano, si sciolgono) nel tempo, è possibile dire che la realtà è costituita da *eventi*. In questo senso (di seguito tematizzato) ci si potrebbe anche spingere ad affermare che la realtà è una creazione continua. Prospettiva affascinante dai tanti risvolti. Qui ci concentreremo su alcuni punti di vista vicini a quello di Panikkar, che ci daranno l'opportunità di illuminare la sua posizione – di per sé chiara, ma di non immediata comprensibilità (soprattutto nelle sue più avanzate implicazioni) – in riferimento alle posizioni scientifiche relative all'oggettività della natura e all'esistenza della "cosa in sé".

Perché è evidente che l'affermazione citata pone subito di fronte a pressanti interrogativi. Ad esempio: cosa vuol dire esattamente l'espressione "è addirittura un altro mondo"? Siamo forse in presenza di una moltiplicazione di mondi, per la quale esistono più 'copie' di me che scrivo, una per ogni cultura umana? Ogni cultura (ovvero: ogni modo di vedere il mondo) produce cioè un nuovo mondo materiale? E, poiché non esistono due uomini che intendano la realtà esattamente allo stesso modo, in ogni dettaglio o sfumatura, si sta forse dicendo che esistono tanti mondi quanti sono gli uomini – peggio, che ogni uomo produce il 'suo' mondo? Sarebbe dunque il solipsismo l'approdo della metafisica di Raimon Panikkar?

Alla luce di un'altra fondamentale affermazione panikkariana, per la quale "Essere è un verbo, non un sostantivo" (5) apparirà più chiaro in che modo e in che senso ogni nuovo sguardo, ogni nuova intenzione, ogni nuova comprensione permettano l'ingresso in un mondo nuovo (ulteriore, se si preferisce). Come in certe pubblicità in cui i fiori sbocciano al passaggio della mano che li accarezza,

la realtà si dischiude in maniera inedita a ogni contatto con l'uomo; il mondo può essere inteso come una creazione continua. Vediamo come.

Creatio continua

Uno dei principali esponenti della teoria medievale della *creatio continua* del mondo da parte di Dio è Anselmo, che nel suo capolavoro filosofico *Monologion* la espone con queste parole:

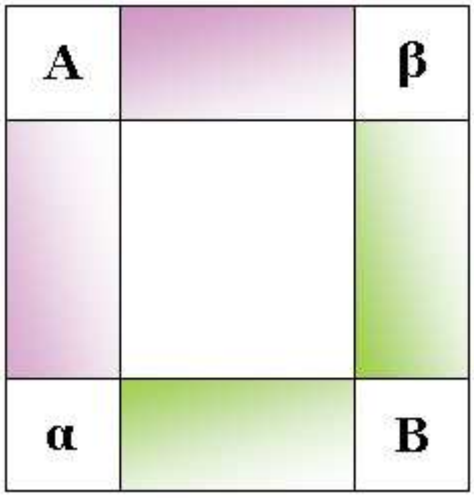
> Come tutte le cose furono fatte dalla somma essenza, così per essa permangono. È chiaro, dunque, che è stato fatto dalla somma essenza tutto ciò che non le è identico. Ma non può esservi dubbio, se non per una mente irrazionale, che tutte le cose create permangono e perserverano nell'essere, finché sono, in quanto sono sostenute da quello stesso ente che le ha fatte essere, dal nulla, ciò che sono. Per una ragione in tutto simile, infatti, a quella con cui si è concluso che tutte le cose che sono esistono in virtù di un ente, per cui questo solo è per se stesso e le altre cose sono per altro, per una ragione simile, dico, si può provare che tutte le cose permanenti permangono in virtù di un ente, per cui solo questo permane per se stesso e le altre per altro. Poiché non può essere diversamente, ossia che le cose create permangano in virtù di altro e ciò da cui sono fatte permanga per se stesso, è necessario che, come nulla è stato fatto se non per l'essenza creatrice presente, così nulla permanga se non per la sua presenza conservatrice (6).

Ovvero – agli antipodi di come il mondo verrà concepito da Descartes, cioè come meccanismo autonomo e semovente, prodotto da un 'colpetto' divino iniziale, che di Dio non ha più bisogno per continuare ad essere – per Anselmo il mondo non solo è stato creato da Dio, ma ha bisogno del sostegno costante del Creatore, attimo dopo attimo, altrimenti il suo fondamento ontologico verrebbe a mancare (e tutto sprofonderebbe nel nulla). Dio ama il mondo e dona questo

amore senza sosta: il mondo nasce da qui, un momento dopo l'altro, dentro questa relazione. Il mondo di Anselmo non può rimanere neppure un istante senza il suo Autore divino.

Anselmo tuttavia parla di un solo mondo che mantiene – grazie a Dio – una sua continuità nel tempo. Esso rimane in un certo senso 'costante': nulla vi si aggiunge, nulla se ne perde. Panikkar parla invece di un "aumento" ontologico causato dalla relazione: accade forse che il mondo si "sdoppi" al sorgere di una nuova relazione, come nella teoria quantistica degli infiniti mondi?

Assolutamente no: la realtà è unica. Quello che accade è che essa, simbolica e non oggettiva (7), si presta a una relazionalità che può forse venir espressa meglio da un'immagine che a parole (8):



Nell'esempio abbiamo due elementi della realtà (**α** e **β**) e due diversi "osservatori" (**A** e **B**). Il mondo "di **A**" è costituito dalle relazioni **M(A) = {Aα + Aβ}**, mentre quello "di **B**" è costituito dalle relazioni **M(B) = {Bα + Bβ}** (utilizzo qui per comodità una notazione vicina a quella insiemistica, senza nessuna pretesa di precisione formale). Si noti che il 'mondo' così inteso è *l'insieme delle relazioni, non delle cose* (essere è un verbo, non un sostantivo: non sono le 'sostanze' ad essere, ma esse 'sono' *ontologicamente* all'interno delle relazioni in cui esse 'sono' *di fatto*). Ecco che, a partire da un materiale unico (i quattro enti mondani **A**, **B**, **α** e **β**), le prospettive dei due osservatori danno luogo a due mondi distinti (il mondo

viola e il mondo verde), ma non separati (la realtà è unica. Se un elemento – ad esempio **a** – venisse distrutto, entrambe le relazioni – **Aa** come **Ba** – ne risulterebbero soppresse). Ecco dove, in ultima istanza, si colloca l'"aumento ontologico" di cui parla Panikkar: nelle nuove relazioni, che danno luogo a un ampliamento del mondo. Bisogna cogliere questo passaggio decisivo: le cose sono nelle relazioni, non viceversa. Sono le relazioni il vero costituente della realtà (ci ritorneremo).

Eppure ci si potrebbe domandare: se né **A** né **B** si ingannano, non dovrebbero per ciò stesso vedere **α** e **β** nello stesso modo (cioè quello vero), stabilendo dunque con essi le medesime relazioni? Ciò presuppone che la conoscenza autentica sia unica (magari quella scientifica); mentre Panikkar nega che sia così: non ogni visione del mondo è per ciò stesso vera, ma ogni autentica visione del mondo può dare l'accesso alla verità delle cose. Di conseguenza, se entrambi i punti di vista sono genuini e non si ingannano (cioè sia **A** sia **B** "sono nel vero"), è comprensibile che la relazione **Aα** differisca da **Bα**.

Concludendo: la metafisica di Panikkar può essere descritta come una forma di *creatio continua*, in cui mondi diversi coesistono, ma non dà luogo a vere e proprie creazioni materiali nell'ambito dello stesso mondo, né a 'sdoppiamenti' (ovvero 'raddoppiamenti'). La realtà è unica.

Impermanenza buddhista

Al che viene da pensare: se il diagramma è rappresentativo del funzionamento dell'ontologia, i poli **α** e **β** potrebbero benissimo rappresentare quelle "cose in sé" di cui la scienza moderna va tanto a caccia e che Panikkar tanto risolutamente nega (9). Per affrontare la questione, potranno essere utili i seguenti brani sulla concezione buddhista della realtà (10):

> 1 [Tra le idee del Buddha] risalta la negazione radicale dell'*atman*, ossia della sostanzialità in qualsiasi sua forma: non c'è anima, non c'è un 'se stesso', non c'è sostanza (11).
>
> 2 L'intuizione del Buddha è quella della pura contingenza, e pertanto la scoperta della mancanza di un soggetto ultimo delle azioni; è l'esperienza primaria della caducità. [...] Tutta la prassi dei monaci buddhisti è basata sull'esperienza vitale di questa caducità (12).
>
> 3 È per mezzo della continuità del corpo (*kaya*) che tutti gli stadi della vita rimangono uniti. [...] Lo stesso accade per la continuità del *dhamma*, Maestà. Una persona viene all'esistenza, un'altra sparisce e la continuità non si spezza. Essi (i *dhamma*) si susseguono senza che vi sia niente di precedente, né di susseguente. Nessuno di essi può essere considerato come l'ultima coscienza (13).

In una nota precedente abbiamo accennato al fatto che Panikkar è sovente in sintonia con posizioni buddhiste. Anche qui l'idea che l'Essere sia ad ogni attimo senza né un precedente né un susseguente lascia riecheggiare quella di *creatio continua* (osservando che la continuità dei corpi mantiene l'unità della realtà); tuttavia qui il punto fondamentale è quello dell'inesistenza della cosa in sé. Dire che "tutto scorre" non risolve il problema, ma si limita a spostarlo: "è la stessa pietra che rotola, o quella che giunge a valle è tutt'altra pietra di quella caduta a monte?". La domanda sembra dunque diventare: "le cose ci sono?" (Dove il timore dell'ontologia scientifica è proprio quello di una risposta negativa, foriera dello spettro dell'idealismo filosofico, di quel soggetto che "pone in essere" le cose). Oppure le cose vengono, per così dire, 'assorbite' dalle relazioni?

Ora, se da un lato è vero che l'adulto non è lo stesso che il bambino, è pur vero che quell'adulto si vergogna della prima umiliazione infantile come si inorgoglisce del primo successo adolescenziale. Quindi, alla domanda "le cose ci sono?" la risposta di Panikkar è: senza dubbio, e non solo nella mente di chi le pensa ma anche fuori (14). È proprio questa la chiave dell'interpretazione: le cose

ci sono, ma non sono mai "in sé", bensì... "fuori di sé" (15). Ogni cosa è com'è nel suo darsi relazionale 'alla luce del sole', quando 'viene al mondo'. Qualunque altra interpretazione è, letteralmente, "fuori dal mondo".

Allora, non sono forse io oggi lo stesso di ieri? In un certo senso no, perché sono cambiato; ma in un altro senso sono sempre io (mi riconosco come la stessa persona). Se dunque si argomenta a favore di un nucleo permanente di questa persona (la sua cosa in sé), cosa rimane? Null'altro che la sua *possibilità di essere* nei miliardi di modi conosciuti (quelli già esperiti dalla persona e manifestati nella sua vita) e la sua possibilità di essere in infiniti altri modi, in parte simili, in parte affatto nuovi (la vita è sempre essenzialmente inattesa), che verranno 'creati' nell'incontro e nella relazione.

La fine dei tempi

Il fisico inglese Julian Barbour, nel tentativo di conciliare la meccanica quantistica e la relatività generale, propone una visione delle cose in cui il tempo non esiste: utilizzando la metafora della pellicola di un film, sostiene che l'intera esistenza potrebbe essere una lunghissima sequenza di istanti (che lui chiama "gli Adesso") statici, che in un certo senso esistono già tutti e che, da questo punto di vista, non sembrano affatto un film: la sensazione di star vedendo un film non deriva infatti dalle caratteristiche della pellicola, ma dal fatto che essa venga proiettata al ritmo di 24 fotogrammi al secondo. Parimenti, il tempo sarebbe solo una "illusione delle nostra coscienza"; di conseguenza "in ogni Adesso esiste una versione differente di noi. Il bambino che nasce oggi non è lo stesso uomo che morirà tra cent'anni. Sono due entità molto differenti, e abitano universi distinti" (ma forse qui sarebbe più adatto il termine 'separati').

Radicalmente diverso dai modelli presentati nei precedenti paragrafi, qui la continuità viene spezzata in una miriade di "Adesso", in ciascuno dei quali ogni cosa viene ricreata (se non nel senso letterale e tradizionale del termine, certamente nel senso materiale: i diversi fotogrammi costituirebbero le tante realtà

esistenti 'simultaneamente'). Non di meno, dal punto di vista appunto della proiezione, l'effetto che farebbe a chi fosse consapevole della correttezza dell'ipotesi di Barbour sarebbe quello di una creazione continua, istante per istante, di quanto viene proiettato (essendoci una discontinuità totale con il 'fotogramma' precedente).

L'universo di Barbour è dunque una pellicola che la coscienza dell'uomo proietta, facendola sembrare un film: in ogni fotogramma c'è un universo differente. Cosa accomuna e tiene insieme tutti i fotogrammi (costituendo di fatto la pellicola)? La fisica: in tutti gli Adesso, evidentemente, deve necessariamente valere la stessa fisica, altrimenti la pellicola assumerebbe delle caratteristiche eterogenee che ne incrinerebbero la proiettabilità. Se ne deduce che 'la' fisica vale dovunque, anche in quei 'fotogrammi' in cui per avventura l'uomo non fosse presente (per il suo essere istantaneo, ogni Adesso è strutturalmente indifferente ad ogni presenza, manipolazione o contributo umano).

Ovvero, tradotto in termini fisici, (per poter affrontare direttamente il tema che ci interessa) la natura possiede una sua intrinseca regolarità, indipendentemente dall'azione o dall'interpretazione dell'uomo. Per il fisico, *la regolarità della natura è oggettiva ed esiste in sé*.

Dal punto di vista di Panikkar questa conclusione è sbagliata: infatti, riprendendo la figura precedente, si osserva che – allo sparire di entrambi gli osservatori, **A** e **B** – anche il mondo scompare (mentre **α** e **β** "rimangono" come "possibilità" di stabilire nuove relazioni). D'altronde, non è certo l'uomo a creare le cose. E dunque?

E dunque, dice Panikkar, esistono delle cose, che abbiamo denominato "poli delle relazioni" (o "simboli"), le quali tuttavia esistono solo nelle relazioni e non in sé. È un dato osservativo: nulla viene al mondo che non sia già per ciò stesso "nel mondo", cioè in una rete di relazioni. Al contrario, la cosa in sé non è mai stata osservata, *di fatto* (né potrebbe mai esserlo, *di diritto*: una qualunque conoscenza della cosa in sé la vedrebbe all'interno di una relazione conoscitiva con un

soggetto conoscente ed essa cesserebbe per ciò stesso di essere in-sé essendo appena diventata con-lui). Non conosciamo nessuna "cosa in sé". Di fatto, conosciamo soltanto cose "fuori di sé", cioè nelle relazioni in cui si manifestano.

Ma, insiste lo scienziato, esistono dunque delle cose. Dire che "non esistono" fuori da ogni relazione è solo una questione di linguaggio (nel senso che si è arbitrariamente deciso di non estendere il termine "essere" a una tale forma di sostanzialità), e che quelle cose – ancorché inaccessibili – continuano a esserci. Insomma, una cosa è l'epistemologia e un'altra l'ontologia: anche se non possiamo conoscere in nessun caso siffatte cose in sé, non di meno esse continuano a permanere. Secondo questa obiezione Panikkar sarebbe nient'altro che un kantiano sofisticato: esistono dei *noumeni*, sono inconoscibili, e semplicemente aggiungiamo un frego (*à la Heidegger*) sul fatto che essi, indipendentemente da ogni relazione, ~~esistano~~. Ma dirlo o non dirlo, scrivendo in un modo o nell'altro, non cambia la 'sostanza' della questione: il mondo continua a mantenere le sue caratteristiche intrinseche anche se lo scienziato esce dal laboratorio durante una reazione chimica per rientrarvi alla fine (e in quel momento osservare che, senza meno, la reazione si è conclusa), ed anche se l'ultimo uomo scompare dal pianeta.

Questa è la posizione di molta scienza (16) e filosofia della scienza; ma anche di molta fantascienza che ha teorizzato un universo in cui ogni angolo gode delle stesse leggi fisiche; popolato da razze e specie eterogenee ma che si dotano della stessa fisica (si pensi alla celebre serie televisiva *Star Trek*); o perfino completamente antropizzato (Asimov).

D'altro canto, certamente Panikkar non vuole negare l'esistenza e la pensabilità della natura, anche indipendentemente da ogni mente umana (17). Anzi, in quanto la natura fa parte del complesso cosmoteandrico della realtà, conserverebbe la sua pensabilità (accessibilità al pensiero, ovvero facoltà di comportarsi secondo strutture riconoscibili dal pensiero) anche se l'ultimo uomo sparisse dalla Terra. Così Panikkar: "le cosiddette leggi della natura non sono leggi

di una natura astratta (che non esiste), né solo leggi dello spirito umano, ma reciprocità del "complesso cosmoteandrico" (18). Cui aggiunge:

> il funzionamento di un essere pare seguire vie, modelli, modi di comportamento che sembrano ubbidire alle regole del pensiero logico. Che i corpi cadano appartiene all'esperienza sensibile; che nella caduta dei corpi essi sembrino seguire, anzi ubbidire a regolarità che il nostro pensiero logico scopre, è una vera rivelazione circa la natura dei corpi. Non basta dire che queste regolarità le abbiamo "dedotte" da una ripetizione di semplici osservazioni, perché noi scopriamo le stesse leggi (della caduta in questo caso) quando estrapoliamo in condizioni ben diverse. Non possiamo affermare che la materia ubbidisca alla mente, ma dobbiamo riconoscere che c'è un'armonia meravigliosa e misteriosa tra la natura e la mente logica dell'uomo (19).

La regolarità della natura non è dunque per Panikkar una mera questione di statistica: c'è un'armonia meravigliosa e misteriosa tra l'Essere e il Pensiero (20). Nell'ambito del complesso cosmoteandrico (dotato delle tre dimensioni di pensiero, materia e libertà) la corrispondenza trova – se non una sua spiegazione – almeno una collocazione intuitiva. Possiamo dire che la natura possegga allora 'in sé' la regolarità che osserviamo? No, la natura non possiede alcuna caratteristica intrinseca, ma tutta la realtà (complesso cosmoteandrico) partecipa delle tre dimensioni appena citate: ogni uomo, animale, pianta, pietra, ogni singola particella di materia. Panikkar ha mostrato che la realtà è unica, non frammentata, in tutti i suoi aspetti: l'uomo è libero ed anche la pietra lo è (a suo modo e a sua misura: Panikkar non intende stabilire impossibili equiparazioni, ma solo analogie che illustrino appunto la continuità di tutto ciò che è), entrambi partecipano anche del pensiero (le cose manifestano più la pensabilità che un pensiero autonomo; eppure fenomeni fisici come l'esperimento quantistico delle due fenditure, in cui la realtà sembra rispondere 'a tono' alle domande

dell'uomo, induce a riflettere in tal senso) oltre che della materialità. Che ne sarà dunque del pensiero alla scomparsa dell'ultimo uomo? Scomparirà il pensiero tipicamente umano, ma non il Pensiero *tout court*. La realtà è cosmoteandrica (21).

Conclusioni

In che senso si può dire che nell'ontologia di Raimon Panikkar esistano "mondi diversi"? Le cose esistono, o tutto ciò che conosciamo non è altro che una creazione della nostra mente? E quindi: il mondo continuerebbe a esistere se l'ultimo uomo sparisse dalla faccia della Terra?

Ho provato a rispondere a queste domande in maniera stringata ma spero chiara, partendo dall'idea che la metafisica di Raimon Panikkar possa venir espressa come una forma di *creazione continua*, lasciando a tal fine riecheggiare brevissimamente l'Oriente e l'Occidente, l'antico e il moderno, la teologia e la scienza. Nel tentativo di spiegare che non esistono realtà occulte ("noumeniche", se si preferisce), accessibili a pochi iniziati ("uomini di scienza", se si preferisce), ma che la realtà è accessibile a tutti gli uomini, perché non esistono punti di vista privilegiati o addirittura esclusivi (il che non vuol dire che siano tutti ugualmente in grado di mostrare il mondo). Insomma, la natura si nasconde, ma più spesso si dà e "le cose sono reali perché *appaiono* reali" (22). Non esistono cose in sé. Tutto ciò che vediamo è "fuori di sé".

NOTE

(1) Scomparso nel 2010. Insignito nel 2001 del Premio Nonino "a un maestro del nostro tempo", Panikkar ha scritto oltre 50 libri; dal 2008 l'editore Jaca Book ne sta pubblicando l'Opera Omnia a cura di Milena Carrara Pavan.

(2) Nell'impossibilità per motivi di spazio di offrire una presentazione più completa, presuppongo qui la conoscenza della metafisica di Raimon Panikkar, a

cominciare dalle nozioni di cosmoteandrismo, mito, simbolo, pluralismo, per le quali rimando ai testi del filosofo, specialmente Panikkar 2000, 2004, 1995. In particolare presuppongo che il lettore sappia che, per Panikkar, la cosa in sé non esiste; che le cose esistono nelle relazioni e che le une e le altre hanno la medesima consistenza ontologica (altrimenti le ultime non sarebbero che meri attributi delle prime). Per una sintesi su questi temi e un approfondimento della critica all'oggettività e alla cosa in sé, mi permetto di rinviare al mio Calabrò 2011.

(3) In Panikkar 2007, i cui temi sono stati ripresi e approfonditi dalla p.ssa Antonella Riem, Preside della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature straniere dell'Università di Udine, nel ciclo trimestrale di seminari sul "sapere della parola creativa" (novembre 2011-gennaio 2012).

(4) Panikkar 1995: 20-21.

(5) Cfr. Panikkar 1992: 183, dove l'autore afferma che, per il buddhismo, essere è un verbo e non un sostantivo. Che questa sia anche la sua personale posizione filosofica, è riscontrabile in Panikkar 1998: 86. Cfr. inoltre Panikkar 2005: 172. L'Essere è nel tempo, nell'evento: le cose sono reali perché appaiono reali. Il padre è padre finché c'è il figlio; quando il figlio non c'è più, smette di essere padre. Le relazioni (ad es., la paternità) non sono qualità che possano venir ipostatizzate negli enti come se si trattasse di un titolo di studio che – una volta attribuito – non possa più esser revocato.

(6) Anselmo 1995: 83-85.

(7) Per questa fondamentale distinzione (e per un approfondimento della correlata differenza simbolica) cfr. Panikkar 2000.

(8) Ringrazio Mimma Peluso per l'elaborazione grafica. Colgo l'occasione per ringraziare anche il dott. Fabrizio Dal Piaz, chimico e ricercatore dell'Università di Salerno, per aver discusso infaticabilmente con me questi contenuti in tante occasioni d'incontro.

(9) Cfr. al riguardo Calabrò 2010.

(10)Va da sé che non esiste una "concezione buddhista della realtà" tout court; il buddhismo, come tutti i grandi orizzonti culturali, è un insieme di insegnamenti, testi, riflessioni, pratiche i cui rivoli si sono accresciuti e diffusi in epoche diverse, con contenuti eterogenei e talvolta perfino incompatibili. Non esiste dunque "il" buddhismo, così come non esiste "il" cristianesimo o "la" scienza. Nel testo qui citato (Panikkar 2006) l'autore fa riferimento a fonti diverse, puntualmente richiamate.

(11)Panikkar 2006: 75. Qui Panikkar distingue, sulla scorta del lavoro di studiosi come Stcherbastky, V. Bhattacharyya, T.R.V. Murti e Regamey, un buddhismo "primitivo o precanonico" dai grandi sistemi Theravada e Mahayana: una delle dottrine centrali di questo buddhismo precanonico sarebbe appunto la negazione radicale dell'atman. Panikkar accenna anche alla diversa prospettiva di altri autori (C.A.F. Rhys Davids, La Vallée Poussin), secondo la quale il Buddha non avrebbe insegnato tale dottrina, che sarebbe solo un'elaborazione posteriore. Tra le due, Panikkar sposa la prima: "non possiamo negare che una serie di testi fondamentali e la tradizione buddhista in generale depongano a favore della prima interpretazione".

(12)Panikkar 2006: 77. Qui Panikkar, che conosce approfonditamente e di prima mano la pratica buddhista moderna, sottolinea il carattere esperienziale della sua conclusione (tratto saliente dell'intera sua opera e di questo libro in particolare) al di là di (non contro) quello meramente esegetico.

(13)Panikkar 2006: 84. Questo brano è tratto da Milindapanha II, 2, 1, testo che riporta il dialogo tra il re Milinda e il monaco Nagasena sulla conoscenza e la saggezza. La tradizione birmana lo considera parte del canone Jataka (contenente i racconti delle nascite anteriori del Buddha) del sistema Theravada.

(14)"Le cose" non sono oggetti, ma simboli. Così Panikkar: "il simbolo non è né un'entità puramente oggettiva presente nel mondo (quella cosa 'laggiù'), né un'entità meramente soggettiva presente nella mente (in noi 'quaggiù'). Non vi è simbolo che non sia dentro e per un soggetto, così come non vi è simbolo che sia

privo di un contenuto specifico rivendicante oggettività. Il simbolo abbraccia e lega costitutivamente i due poli del reale: l'oggetto e il soggetto" (Panikkar 2000: 23).

(15) Avevo già terminato la stesura di questo articolo quando ho ritrovato l'espressione del titolo in un passaggio del volume (Sini 2008: 60): "ogni cosa, anche la più piccola, partecipa dell'universale animazione ed è nel contempo "fuori di sé", nella esteriorizzazione dello spazio e nella "passività" della materia". Libro che segnalo non solo per correttezza, ma anche per consigliarlo come lettura urgente a tutti coloro che desiderino approfondire le tematiche trattate qui da un punto di vista originale, vicino (non sovrapponibile) a quello di Panikkar.

(16) Non tutta, per fortuna. Così il fisico J.D. Barrow, citato in (Presilla-Rondinara 2010: 246): "è assai improbabile che [l'universo] sia, anche solo approssimativamente, lo stesso ovunque. [...] La velocità della luce è limitata e tale è, pertanto, la nostra conoscenza della struttura dell'universo. Noi non possiamo sapere se esso sia finito o infinito, se abbia avuto un'origine o se avrà una fine, se la struttura della fisica sia la stessa ovunque, e se in ultima analisi l'universo sia un luogo ordinato o disordinato".

(17) Visto più da vicino, questo è un problema soltanto per la prospettiva scientifica (dualistica), per la quale l'essere umano è l'unico portatore di pensiero: nella cornice del cosmoteandrismo, l'uomo non è affatto visto in questi termini, e la scomparsa di ogni uomo dal mondo non implica la scomparsa del pensiero tout court: il Pensiero è una delle tre dimensioni della realtà, mentre l'uomo è un ente del complesso cosmoteandrico; il Pensiero non attiene solo all'essere umano, ma anche alla materia (che conserva la sua pensabilità) e alla dimensione divina (che conserva la sua Sapienza, per dirlo con le Scritture).

(18) Panikkar 2005: 182.

(19) Panikkar 2005: 168.

(20)È noto che la cosa ha sempre colpito molto lo stesso Einstein, che nel 1936 affermò: "l'eterno mistero del mondo è la sua comprensibilità" (citato in Laudisa 2009).

(21)Anche per queste tematiche (la libertà della materia e la sua pensabilità) rinvio a Calabrò 2011.

(22)Panikkar 2000: 22.

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http://www.paolocalabro.info

Annalisa Federici

Modernist Fiction and the French *Nouveau Roman*: Transnational Connections

Abstract I: This essay focuses on a comparative study of Modernist fiction and the French *Nouveau Roman*. Not only do these literary phenomena display some common features allowing us to regard them as manifestations of the same cultural climate, but the *Nouveaux Romanciers*' explicit mention of the Modernist novelists as their admired predecessors also seems to legitimise an approach that establishes continuity and reveals interesting transnational connections. Indeed, their relationship can be assessed in terms of reception and assimilation of a model. Such a reading shows some striking analogies between Woolf's and Sarraute's aesthetics on the one hand, and the never-ending quests of Joyce and Butor on the other.

Abstract II: Questo saggio propone uno studio comparativo della narrativa modernista e del *Nouveau Roman* basato su una serie di tratti comuni che permettono di considerare i due fenomeni letterari come manifestazioni di una medesima temperie culturale. Per di più, la menzione esplicita da parte dei *Nouveaux Romanciers* dei romanzieri modernisti come illustri precursori evidenzia interessanti parallelismi, nonché un rapporto di continuità. Tale approccio analizza il loro legame in termini di ricezione e assimilazione di un modello, e si presta ad uno studio incrociato dei sorprendenti punti di contatto tra le ricerche della Woolf e della Sarraute contrapposte a quelle, non meno simili, di Joyce e Butor.

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Anglo-American literary Modernism in all its forms (including fiction, the genre here at issue) is a daringly experimental cultural phenomenon, and one that may be considered as the most emblematic expression of 'modernity'. This seems to be confirmed, for instance, by the fact that the French novel (to take a case in point) of the first decades of the twentieth century shows some of the innovative features characterising Modernist fiction as well, yet formal experimentation and linguistic manipulation are never so extreme as to allow any kind of comparison, especially because such attempts to break with the literary conventions of the past are sporadic and not entirely cut loose from tradition. Even though *Les Faux-monnayeurs* by André Gide (published in 1925, the same year as Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*) is a good example of metafiction in the same way as Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1919-27), which in addition shows a masterly treatment of time and the typical theme of the *Künstlerroman*, and though Valery Larbaud, Joyce's friend and translator, makes use of the interior monologue in his short novels (almost contemporary with *Ulysses*) *Amants, heureux amants* (1921) and *Mon plus secret conseil* (1923), it is only with the emergence within the literary panorama of the 1950s of the so-called *Nouveaux Romanciers* that begins a period of great innovation of the narrative form which not only is as radical as the one characterising Modernist fiction, but also moves from the same assumptions and manifests itself in analogous ways.

The French *Nouveau Roman*, as the only 'other modernity' capable of standing comparison with the Modernist novel, is not a real movement (at least in the sense that its leading figures, like their English forerunners, neither worked jointly nor signed manifestos) but a convenient label under which such 'new novelists' as Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Jean Ricardou, Claude Simon, Claude Ollier and Robert Pinget (whose works were mainly published by *Les Éditions de Minuit*, hence the alternative name "École de Minuit") came to be grouped. These writers shared common attitudes not only in posing a serious challenge to what they vaguely called the Balzacian novel (in the same way as

the Modernists rejected the conventions of the Victorian novel) but also in following the path of the great innovators of the 1920s and 1930s, whom they recognised as renowned models and predecessors. In Sarraute's words,

> What unites us is a common attitude towards traditional literature. It is the conviction of the necessity of a constant transformation of all forms as well as of our complete freedom to choose them; it is the awareness that a real revolution took place in literature in the first three decades of this century, that such great revolutionaries as Proust, Joyce and Kafka opened the way for the modern novel, and that this movement is irreversible (qtd. in Calin 1976: 8)(1).

> Proust, after Henry James, examined our inner life under a microscope. He discovered the endless proliferation of sensations, images, memories and feelings never analysed before, which underlie our gestures and intonations. [...] But he observed them at a certain distance after they had run their course, as if they were static and fixed through memory. [...] It is Joyce who set such a microscopic universe in motion. These tenuous sensations become manifest, as they are carried away by the stream of consciousness, through the interior monologue. At every moment an uninterrupted flux of words – whether coupled with actions or not – flows through our consciousness and disappears [...]. Finally, Virginia Woolf captured the flow of instants through the rhythm of her sentences. "Every moment", she said, "is a saturated atom, a combination of thoughts and sensations". Time is a stream of iridescent drops reflecting for every one of us a different image of the world. Our life is an eternal present potentially containing the whole universe (Sarraute 1996: 1650-1651).

Though generally neglected by criticism (2), Modernist fiction and the *Nouveau Roman* undoubtedly display some common features allowing us to regard them as manifestations of the same cultural climate – a mere three decade gap

separates the literary output of Joyce and Woolf from that of Sarraute and Butor, which are under any other respect quite similar in both theoretical conception and narrative practice – while the *Nouveaux Romanciers*' explicit mention of the Modernist novelists as their admired predecessors seems to legitimise a comparative approach that establishes continuity and intentionally avoids sharp distinctions between, on the one hand, a cultural phenomenon that is emblematic of modernity and, on the other, one prefiguring post-modernity (3). Moreover, in the context of what has been named "change of dominant from modernist to postmodernist writing" (McHale 1986), that is, a change "from problems of *knowing* to problems of *modes of being* – from an epistemological dominant to an *ontological one*" (McHale 1986: 10), emerges one of the peculiar traits of twentieth-century fiction in its totality: the overall presence of questions concerning the intrinsic nature of, as well as the possible ways of knowing, both the outside world and narrative seen as a *world of words* in which such issues undergo a systematic textualization, according to a marked tendency to referentiality and self-referentiality/reflexivity at the same time.

The concept of representation is a fundamental concern for such novelists as Joyce, Woolf, Sarraute and Butor – who defines fiction as "one of the essential constituents of our apprehension of reality" (Butor 1960: 7) – and this emerges from their theoretical reflections as well as their narrative practice. Rejecting the outdated notion of the novel as *mimesis*, they conceived fictional writing as a highly self-conscious, detailed analysis of both the inner and the outer world, of consciousness (hence the use of the interior monologue, or what Sarraute named *sous-conversation* (4)) as well as reality (whose depiction is never completely abandoned, as can be seen, for instance, from the overabundance of details that is typical of Joyce and Butor), thus revealing "the ontological status of all literary fiction: its quasi-referentiality, its indeterminacy, its existence as words and world" (Waugh 1984: 101). Metafiction – that Patricia Waugh defines as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an

artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 1984: 2), identifying it as emblematic of the twentieth century – is an appropriate term to refer to Modernist fiction as well as to the French new novel, especially because its ambiguous ontological status is for the authors in question a major issue: "metafictional writers […] are self-consciously anxious to assert that, although literary fiction is only a verbal reality, it constructs through language an imaginative world that has, within its own terms, full referential status as an alternative to the world in which we live. […] Metafiction lays bare the linguistic basis of the 'alternative worlds' constructed in literary fictions" (Waugh 1984: 100).

Both the Modernist novel and the *Nouveau Roman* can be seen as responses to a strong need to redefine fiction as a form of representation of reality: the rejection of the narrative norms of the past (epitomized by Victorian or Balzacian realism, in terms of which, they felt, the novel as genre was still viewed and assessed) derives not from a mere desire for novelty, but from a general awareness that such norms are totally inadequate in codifying a new way of experiencing reality itself. In this respect, Woolf's and Sarraute's remarks sound strikingly similar:

> We are sharply cut off from our predecessors. A shift in the scale – the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages – has shaken the fabric from top to bottom, alienated us from the past and made us perhaps too vividly conscious of the present. Every day we find ourselves doing, saying, or thinking things that would have been impossible to our fathers. […] No age can have been more rich than ours in writers determined to give expression to the differences which separate them from the past and not to the resemblances which connect them with it. […] So then our contemporaries afflict us because they have ceased to believe. The most sincere of them will only tell us what it is that happens to himself. They cannot make a world, because they are not free of other human beings. They cannot tell stories

> because they do not believe that stories are true. They cannot generalize. They depend on their senses and emotions, whose testimony is trustworthy, rather than on their intellects, whose message is obscure. And they have perforce to deny themselves the use of some of the most powerful and some of the most exquisite of the weapons of their craft (Woolf 1966: 157-160).

> The quest which drives the novelist to attach himself to a subject matter that is new, unknown and that puts up resistance arouses his curiosity, his passion and stimulates his effort. It forces him to relentlessly abandon the conventions and habits which interpose between this new topic and himself, preventing him from reaching it. It compels him to lay aside exhausted and useless forms in order to create lively ones, and to forge new, powerful tools. [...] Such an incessant movement from what is known to what is unknown, from what has already been expressed to what has never been expressed before, determines – not only for literature but also for any other form of art – a condition of perpetual evolution (Sarraute 1996: 1647-1648).

At a three decade distance, these writers questioned the idea of the novel as storytelling or as objective narration of a succession of fictional events, on the assumption that such notion imposes a false order on reality and creates an illusion of the intelligibility, coherence and meaningfulness of the world surrounding us. On the contrary, the 'new realism' they advocated reflects what they perceived to be the fundamentally chaotic, transient, fragmentary nature of both inner and outer reality through the adoption of forms and structures which are discontinuous (Woolf), erratic (Sarraute) and deliberately ambiguous (Butor), often (and this is especially the case with Robbe-Grillet and Ricardou) in order to demonstrate that fiction is constituted instead primarily by writing itself, which produces rather than copies reality. Of course they never dispensed with narrativity – let us consider its profusion in Joyce's *Ulysses*, or in Butor's *L'Emploi du temps* and *Degrés* – but rather problematized it and brought forward the constructedness of fiction as well

as the compositional process itself, in order to question the idea that stories would simply recount events that are ontologically prior to the act of narration.

This, on the one hand, brings to the fore that shift in focus from content to form and language which is notoriously the most representative feature of Modernist fiction and which is also typical of the *Nouveau Roman*, while, on the other, presupposes a high degree of self-reflexivity that, as already mentioned, equally characterises both. Such issues appear to be closely connected: not only does the form/content distinction often become redundant, but this seems to be the case exactly because "self-elucidation […] implies that what is brought into play in fiction is not only the object of representation but also the means of representation. The poetics of fiction become engaged in the reading of fiction and are incorporated into its 'subject matter'" (Jefferson 1980: 17). As criticism has almost unanimously pointed out, beyond the aforementioned rejection of plot and omniscient narration, of an exact chronological order as well as of a solid portrayal of fictional characters (which in a way anticipated the new novelists' frequent claim that the characters of the new fiction should exist simply in the anonymous form of the personal pronoun), the actual innovation introduced by Modernist authors was the fact of devoting particular attention to formal experimentation as well as regarding form not merely as a means for handling the content, but in a sense *the* content itself. The *Nouveaux Romanciers* share similar concerns, and Butor's words in this regard are a case in point:

> Therefore, formal elaboration in fiction is of primary importance. [...] It seems evident that, since form is a matter of choice [...], new forms reveal the choice of new contents [...]. Conversely, different ways of conceiving reality correspond to different narrative forms. Now it is clear that the world in which we live is in a state of endless transformation. Traditional narrative techniques cannot integrate every new relationship consequently arising. [...] Formal invention in fiction, far from being opposed to realism as naive critics often suppose, is a condition *sine qua non* for an even more emphatic realism. [...]

> The theme or subject matter, as we have already seen, cannot be separated from the way in which it is presented, from the form through which it is expressed. New situations, a new awareness of what the status of fiction is and what kind of relationship it has with reality correspond to new themes and forms on whatever level – language, style, technique, composition, structure. On the other hand, the search for new forms, revealing new subject matters, also reveals new relationships (Butor 1960: 8-11).

Even though the linguistic invention that is so peculiar to literary Modernism seems to be absent in the works of the new novelists, and though Joyce's verbal fireworks have substantially remained an unparalleled phenomenon, in both cases the language of fiction comes to the fore as the object as well as the means of representation; its validity is constantly questioned (but never denied) since – as twentieth-century writers often lament – its simple relationship to the world, that of naming and describing, no longer seems to apply transparently and words appear to separate themselves from their respective referents, whereas its fragmentation often reflects the fragmentary nature of both inner and outer reality as the novelist perceives it.

As I hope it is clear from this brief overview, the French *Nouveau Roman* derives and often emphasises most of the experimental traits characterising English fiction in the first decades of the twentieth century, showing a constant evolution of the narrative form that is due to the emergence of new ways of experiencing reality. This comparative approach helps to shed light on the parallelism existing between these distinct, and at the same time very similar attempts at a radical innovation of fictional norms, but we should not forget that their close connection can be also assessed in terms of reception and assimilation of a model. Such a reading reveals some striking analogies between, on the one hand, the aesthetics of Woolf and that of Sarraute, which are mainly focused on the relationship between sensation and language, and on the other hand the

never-ending quests of Joyce and Butor, both aimed at creating fictional worlds that could rival the one we live in.

Sarraute, Woolf and the "anxiety of influence"

As one critic has recently pointed out, "from the famous 'Entretien avec Virginia Woolf' […] conducted by Jacques-Émile Blanche for the literary journal *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* in August 1927 to the intertextual character of Edward Dalloway in Julia Kristeva's contemporary de Beauvoirian saga *Les Samouraïs* […], the work of Virginia Woolf remains a milestone on the French literary scene" (Villeneuve 2002: 19) (5). Though partly overshadowed by the genius of Joyce, who in the 1920s and 1930s monopolised the attention of the writers and critics at the core of the Parisian intellectual scene, Woolf's oeuvre had a significant impact – mainly fostered by the appearance of the first French translations of her novels and of the pioneering monograph *Le Roman psychologique de Virginia Woolf* by Floris Delattre (1932), as well as by the relationship that Bloomsbury maintained with Paris from the Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1910 onwards (6) – on the thought and literary production of a generation of writers who emerged a decade after her death. Among these, Nathalie Sarraute holds a significant, but often uncertain, position: if in some essays and *entretiens* she explicitly mentions Woolf among her models and precursors or does not hesitate to express her own admiration for the great achievements of her art (7), on other occasions her attitude is not devoid of contradictions. Whenever Sarraute refuses to admit the existence of any kind of similarity between her own style or sensibility and that of Virginia Woolf, the latter represents "a deep source of fascination and influence hidden and dealt with in the most complex registers of ambivalence" (Villeneuve 2002: 29).

In this regard, it seems interesting to quote some of Sarraute's remarks during an interview entitled "Virginia Woolf ou la visionnaire du 'maintenant'", in which the French writer first concedes to her supposed model the usual merit of playing

a key role in the process of radical transformation of twentieth century fiction (in which, of course, she took part herself), but then declines, showing a certain amount of ill-concealed "anxiety of influence", any comparison with her own style and compositional process:

> For me she [Virginia Woolf] has always been, along with Proust and Joyce, one of the great writers who have opened the way to modern literature, to contemporary fiction. Like Proust, Joyce and Kafka, she contributed to the transformation of the modern novel, to that shift in focus from plot and character to the art of fiction itself. I believe the substance of Virginia Woolf's novels is the flow of time. Her style, through a particular rhythm and fluidity, immediately conveys to the reader a sense of the flow of instants. Every moment, she said, is a saturated atom, a combination of thoughts and sensations. Time is for her a stream of tiny drops reflecting a different image of the world for each of us. [...] People have talked about our "similarities", about the influence of Virginia Woolf on what I have written. I think our sensibilities are really totally unlike each other. In Virginia Woolf's novels, the entire universe, swept along by time, flows through the consciousnesses of the characters, who are passive, as if carried hither and thither by the ceaseless current of moments. In my works, characters are always in a state of hyperactivity: a dramatic action unfolds on the level of their "tropisms", these rapid movements slipping on the frontiers of consciousness. And that produces a completely different stylistic rhythm (Villelaur 1961: 3) (8).

Despite such strenuous defence of the originality of her own creative vein, Sarraute's words implicitly bring to the fore the aims and beliefs she shared with Woolf: both writers almost exclusively focus their attention on the depiction of the inner world – which Sarraute defines as "the stuff of fiction par excellence" (Villelaur 1961) (9), recalling Woolf's claim that "for the moderns […] the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology" (Woolf 1966: 108) – on the

vibration of thoughts, fleeting sensations and unspoken words, on the anonymous, pre-linguistic inner movements of the psyche that the French author names "tropisms":

> These movements, of which we are hardly cognisant, slip through us on the frontiers of consciousness in the form of indefinable, extremely rapid sensations. They hide behind our gestures, beneath the words we speak and the feelings we manifest, all of which we are aware of experiencing, and able to define. They seemed, and still seem to me, to constitute the secret source of our existence in what might be called its nascent state (Sarraute 1956: II).

By praising the fluidity and rhythmic quality of Woolf's writing, Sarraute recalls the transient, evanescent, amorphous nature of what her fiction tries to capture – "a substance as anonymous as blood, a magma without name or contours" (Sarraute 1956: 74) – through an idiosyncratic style and use of language that, in spite of her claims, is for both of them fluent and at the same time discontinuous, ever-flowing but also fragmented by a peculiar overabundance of dashes, ellipses, juxtapositions of images, paratactic structures. As the following extracts show, the visual impact of such formal devices is as striking as the similarities concerning their use:

> It seems as if the whole world were flowing and curving – on the earth the trees, in the sky the clouds. I look up, through the trees, into the sky. […] If that blue could stay for ever; if that hole could remain for ever; if this moment could stay for ever. But Bernard goes on talking. Up they bubble – images. "Like a camel", … "a vulture". The camel is a vulture; the vulture a camel; for Bernard is a dangling wire, loose, but seductive (Woolf 1931: 27).

> Pitilessly, the lazy, unctuous vowels stretch, wallow and sprawl all over him … The holidaaays … the short final consonant brings a brief respite, and then it'll start up again … the suhhn … the seeea … the stale-smelling liquid that they disgorge splashes over him … (Sarraute 1968: 39).

However – as shown by their conception of literary creation as verbal transposition (and thus external manifestation) of thoughts and perceptions, as well as by their idea of language as surface manifestation of a deep, psychological reality – their aesthetics is not entirely inwardly-focused, but rather founded on a dichotomy or mutual tension between such antithetic elements as consciousness and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, unity and fragmentation.

Virginia Woolf, whose aim was to "achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords, showing all the traces of the mind's passage through the world; achieve in the end some kind of whole made of shivering fragments" (qtd. in Bell 1987: 138) (10), conceived her own writing process as a both inward and outward movement, as a recording of the "myriad impressions" (11) that reality produces on our flowing consciousness, but also as the projection of a nucleus of thoughts and sensations (that is, the revelation of inestimable value deriving from what she names a "moment of being") on to reality itself. Her major accomplishment is the creation of a narrative form that brings the transcendent into the actual through the verbalization of rare moments of insight, in which a deep meaning suddenly originates from the reception of impulses from the outside world and then becomes manifest, real, concrete only through language:

> And so I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by

> putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me (Woolf 1989: 81).

For Nathalie Sarraute, language is, properly speaking, the sole component of her fictional world: not only do anonymous voices (in the form of dialogues and interior monologues) occupy the place traditionally assigned to narration, but words, whether spoken or unspoken, are conceived as the objective correlative of almost imperceptible psychological processes, the surface manifestation of deep sensations which, thanks to an upward movement that she names *jaillissement* or *aboutissement* (12), emerge and become indivisible from language itself. The dichotomy depth/surface informs her own conception of the compositional process, which is aimed, as it is for Woolf, at searching the true reality behind (but one should say below) appearances, at unveiling what is unknown, invisible, "that thing which bears no name, which must be transformed into language" (qtd. in Angremy 1995: 38). For both writers literary creation involves a certain 'permeability' of the self, a sort of osmosis between the inner and the outer world, whereas language plays a crucial role as the medium of composition seen as "transmuting process" (Olivier Bell and McNeillie 1982: 102), or verbal equivalent of a reality (thoughts, perceptions, mere impressions) which is primarily non-verbal.

Furthermore, the analogies that link Woolf and Sarraute go far beyond the close connection existing between life and art, between their sensibility on the one hand, and their particular way of conceiving narrative on the other, but also extend to certain aspects of their literary production as well as to shared formal features and stylistic devices. In this regard, it seems interesting to draw a comparison between such texts as Woolf's *Moments of Being* and Sarraute's *Enfance*, which not only are characterised by a peculiar mixture of

autobiography, memoir-writing and narrative self-reflexivity, but can also be interpreted as metanarrative commentaries concerning the origins as well as the basic principles (the relationship linking sensory perception, memory and writing, the latter seen as fundamental for shaping personal identity) of each author's aesthetics and compositional process. Moreover, if on the one hand Woolf's short stories (13) and Sarraute's brief texts published in the collection *Tropismes* reveal a common attempt to create experimental sketches through which such issues as representation, perception and the relationship between consciousness and reality could be dealt with (14), on the other hand it is the texture itself of their longer narratives that manifests a similar way of devising a discontinuous and erratic succession of events through simple juxtapositions of images. In this respect, for instance, Woolf's novel *The Waves*, which is almost exclusively constructed out of a sequence of dramatic monologues, can be seen as anticipating the fictional universe of Sarraute's *Les Fruits d'or* and *Entre la vie et la mort*, that is entirely made of voices soliloquising or dialogising with other voices. In all three, moreover, almost nothing happens, while the subjective dimension of inner life is brought to the fore through the representation of the psychological processes unfolding in the minds of ethereal (in the case of Sarraute even anonymous) characters, in a style that is fluid, rhythmic (due to the abundance of repetitions and cross-references), but also discontinuous:

> "I see the beetle", said Susan. "It is black, I see; it is green, I see; I am tied down with single words. But you wander off; you slip away; you rise up higher, with words and words in phrases" (Woolf 1931: 11).

> I need to sense… I don't quite know what it is… it's something like what you feel in the presence of the first blade of grass that timidly sends up a shoot… a crocus that is still closed… it is such a perfume that they spread, but it is not a perfume, not even a smell, it has no name […]… every particle of me is imbued with it (Sarraute 1963: 153).

And it is precisely in terms of stylistic analogies, as well as of a shared need to adapt fiction to their peculiar vision of life, that the relationship between Nathalie Sarraute and Virginia Woolf can be assessed, and that the former's attempt to dissociate herself from the latter seems quite strange.

Challenging the model: Butor and Joyce

The reception of James Joyce in France is a complex phenomenon starting in the 1920s with the author's own settlement in Paris and direct involvement in the creation of a sort of personal myth, by which he came to occupy a central position among the French literary élite. Thanks to his acquaintance with the booksellers and publishers Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach, as well as their renowned circles (gravitating towards their prestigious firms, La Maison des Amis des Livres and Shakespeare and Company respectively), Joyce came into contact with such intellectuals as Valery Larbaud, Eugene Jolas, Léon-Paul Fargue, Philippe Soupault, André Gide, Paul Valéry, who became not only friends and supporters, but also critics and translators of his works. To both admirers and detractors, Joyce's name was soon synonymous with daring formal experimentation and masterful use of the interior monologue, the epitome of the "revolution of the word" advocated by such avant-garde journals as Jolas's *transition*. As Slote remarks, "the story of Joyce's influence on the scenes of French literature […] begins with Valery Larbaud", who soon "replaced Pound as the primary 'impresario' for *Ulysses*" (Slote 2004: 362). Favourably impressed by some of the episodes at that time serialised in the *Little Review*, Larbaud introduced Joyce's genius to the Parisian intellectual scene with a lecture at La Maison des Amis des Livres in December 1921 (an expanded version of which appeared in the prestigious *Nouvelle Revue Française*), drawing the attention of the reading public to the stylistic innovations of Joyce's masterpiece and its use of the stream of consciousness, its overall unity and complex structural organisation, as well as the

Homeric correspondences, thus paving the way for the long-awaited volume publication by Shakespeare and Company in February 1922.

As a widely debated literary phenomenon that in the 1920s and 1930s is the subject of countless reviews, articles, critical commentaries and translations – among which worthy of mention is the French version *Ulysse*, published in 1929 after many years of efforts and disputes between the translators Auguste Morel, Stuart Gilbert and Larbaud himself – Joyce's oeuvre becomes a real source of inspiration and overt influence mainly with the emergence of the *Nouveau Roman*, for whose exponents, but especially for Michel Butor, Joyce represents, as mentioned earlier, a distinguished model and precursor (15). Furthermore, the new novelists' attempt to confer legitimacy on their project by appealing to the precedent of Joycean Modernism shows that the peculiarity of his literary achievement "sets his texts apart from most other modernist works while it relates them to our own cultural moment" (Attridge 1995: 14). In such a perspective, the relationship between Joyce and Butor can be assessed not only in terms of overt influence, shared purposes and common aesthetic values, but also as a *fil rouge* that links the boldest experiments of modernity to our postmodern era, a standpoint from which it is nowadays possible to recognise, retrospectively, that "something like post-modernism does indeed exist *as a stylistic feature* of some number of literary texts" (Dettmar 1996: 12-13), and that "the most 'untimely' modernist texts, *Ulysses* foremost among them, always contain the germ of their own postmodernity, and effectively outline the critique of their own fictive enterprise" (Dettmar 1996: 48) (16).

It is indeed the acute awareness of a common way of conceiving certain aspects of the narrative form – first and foremost the central importance of language, seen as both the means and the object of representation – that, since the beginning of his own career, has led Butor to manifest his great admiration for Joyce, and then to avow the significant impact he has always had on his

narrative production, for which Joyce's impressive literary accomplishment represents a source of influence that is stimulating and inhibitory at the same time:

> Joyce's literary production has greatly impressed me, in every sense of the term. It has had a profound effect on me, it has left its mark on me, and the same is true for the way in which Joyce creates his texts by means of schemata. For instance, as far as *Ulysses* is concerned, the *Odyssey* framework and the Homeric correspondences (but these are just a few examples among many others): well, this has exerted a decisive influence over me. As regards *Finnegans Wake*, it is evident that such a book has left a mark on me, and that, in order for this mark to be not so evident, for a long time I have refrained from any kind of verbal manipulation. Precisely, so as to be influenced by major issues only. But all the books that I have written in the last few years bear the mark of *Finnegans Wake*. [...] Therefore, Joyce has encouraged me to do a lot of things, has given me many ideas, has taught me so much. But, for a long time, he has also prevented me from doing certain things. And so that problem of the orthographic manipulation: no, I couldn't do it, Joyce had gone too far... (qtd. in Santschi 1982: 117-118).

Unsurprisingly, in his essay *Petite croisière préliminaire à une reconnaissance de l'archipel Joyce*, Butor praises the distinguishing features of Joyce's writing – the great complexity of his narrative style, the linguistic invention and verbal manipulation by which formal aspects become *the* content, the use of the interior monologue as direct representation of the characters' psychological processes, the coexistence of order and chaos, as well as a certain semantic density involving active participation on the part of the reader – which can be more or less explicitly found (except for some deliberate neglects) in his own narrative production of the 1950s:

> It has been claimed that the main character in *Ulysses* is language, and this is absolutely true. Little by little, as one penetrates deep into the book, this "means" acquires an independence that is more and more remarkable. Each episode has its own style, its musical tone, its stylistic devices, which are determined by its subject matter as well as its place within the overall framework. [...] By using the interior monologue technique, he [Joyce] wants to analyse in detail the inner world of his characters (Butor 1960: 201-203).

> Such an unprecedented use of language gives the book [*Finnegans Wake*] an aspect of almost absolute impenetrability and yet, little by little, those swarming pages finally become clearer. Joyce adds to the English language, which serves as a basis, countless provincialisms and misspellings; he multiplies neologisms and dialect terms; he groups words together and contracts them, thus obtaining an incredible density of expression. [...] He carries to extremes his techniques of verbal counterpoint, piling up through such distortions many different meanings at the same time. [...] The endless variation of superimpositions and dislocations gives the author the possibility to change as he likes the clarity or obscurity of his means of expression. [...] It is typical of the very essence of his work that it can be read and understood only gradually. Beyond such a chaotic appearance, everyone can enter its complex organisation by their own means. Given a certain passage, the literal meaning one can initially find in it, is not necessarily the same (Butor 1960: 209-210) (17).

Indeed, in the context of a supposed continuity between Modernist fiction and the *Nouveau Roman*, Butor's extensive and heterogeneous literary output seems to be characterised by the same inclusiveness and experimental realism that distinguish Joyce's oeuvre. Both writers conceive the narrative form as a separate world of words, as a highly self-reflexive epistemological framework in which it is possible to investigate the relationship between consciousness and reality, text and (both

inner and outer) world, by paying particular attention to such fundamental issues as language, structural organisation and formal experimentation. Not only for Butor, but also "for Joyce, language was the primary mode of apprehension of reality" (French 1982: 239), in the same way as the notion of representation is central to their aesthetic ideals. Butor's claim that fiction is "the phenomenological domain par excellence, the field par excellence in which it is possible to study how reality manifests itself" (Butor 1960: 8) applies to his own choice of a central character's gradual process of apprehension of the world surrounding him as a framework for his major novels, but also to their shared attempt to textualize mental processes, as well as depict reality as it appears to consciousness through endless accumulations of facts and 'naturalistic' details.

As shown in *Ulysses* (and carried to extremes in *Finnegans Wake*), Joyce's aim was to create a complex mental model or "mimesis of consciousness" (Riquelme 1983: 151). Through a systematic representation of streams of thoughts, perceptions, memories and inner voices, Joyce's *hypermnesiac machine* (18) "seems to mimic the operation of a human mind by developing a textual and intertextual memory accessible to both characters' and readers' minds" (Rickard 1999: 14). In such emblematic an extract as the following one, for example, from the thoughts and visual perceptions combining in Bloom's mind arises, almost by chance, an involuntary memory of the past:

> Mr Bloom stood at the corner, his eyes wandering over the multicoloured hoardings. Cantrell and Cochrane's Ginger Ale (Aromatic). Clery's summer sale. No, he's going on straight. Hello. *Leah* tonight: Mrs Bandman Palmer. Like to see her in that again. *Hamlet* she played last night. Male impersonator. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide? Poor papa! How he used to talk about Kate Bateman in that! Outside the Adelphi in London waited all the afternoon to get in. Year before I was born that was: sixtyfive. […] Every word is so deep, Leopold. Poor papa! Poor man! I'm glad I didn't go into the room to look at his face. That day! O

> dear! O dear! Ffoo! Well, perhaps it was the best for him. Mr Bloom went round the corner and passed the drooping nags of the hazard. No use thinking of it any more. Nosebag time. Wish I hadn't met that M'Coy fellow (Joyce 1992: 93).

Not only does the regular alternation (or even merging) of third-person narration and interior monologue try to represent the complex relationship between mind and world, while narrative itself displays the workings of a textual memory by means of repetitions, quotations and a constant reworking of its own material, but the fictional universe also addresses some of the major issues of contemporary psychology. Therefore, "*Ulysses* functions", writes Rickard, "as a site of struggle or tension between competing philosophical and psychological conceptions of the nature of human subjectivity and the role of memory within that subjectivity or selfhood. *Ulysses* – shaped both by the dominant philosophical and psychological discourses of its own time and by older models of mind or self – enacts or works through the struggle between these often incompatible models rather than presenting one version or model of subjectivity" (Rickard 1999: 3).

As regards Butor, similar concerns are at the root of his own conception of fiction as both "a response to a certain state of consciousness" (Butor 1960: 10-11) and "a means of interpreting reality" (qtd. in Charbonnier 1967: 78), as an instrument of analysis of the acts of consciousness through which reality can be experienced but also of the outside world, whose 'presence' is deeply felt by the reader, hence the attempt to reproduce the complex mechanisms of thought, memory and perception without diminishing the importance of realistic details nonetheless. For both authors such an ideological framework presupposes an encyclopaedic aim, a desire for inclusiveness that obviously requires a scrupulous mental elaboration, a proliferation of patterns and ordering principles, and a structural rigour achieved through outlines giving internal cohesion to a never-ending accumulation of facts and details. In this regard, one should not be

surprised at Butor's fascination for "the way in which Joyce creates his texts by means of schemata" (qtd. in Santschi 1982: 117), or at his own declaration: "I begin to write a novel only after I have been studying its general design for some months, only when I am in possession of a series of plans whose efficacy – as far as the expression of what initially attracted my attention is concerned – I think is finally sufficient" (Butor 1960: 273). From a stylistic point of view, moreover, both writers share an inexhaustible need for experimentation – not only on a semantic and syntactic level, but also as regards the merging of different genres, and of narrativity as well as metanarrativity – and accurate formal elaboration as means of investigating what they perceive to be an extremely complex reality.

Given the debt that Butor acknowledged to Joyce, and the manifold analogies mainly regarding their way of conceiving fiction, it is easy to notice that their narrative production reveals, despite some stylistic peculiarities, a number of recurring features. Both *Ulysses* and *L'Emploi du temps*, for instance, manifest a fundamental concern for the problematics of representation: such novels enact a central character's process of apprehension of a reality which is elusive and extremely chaotic, as well as of a past that is obscure and difficult to retrieve – either spontaneously, as in *Ulysses*'s displaying of the workings of involuntary memory, or through a conscious attempt to fill in the gap that separates it from the present moment by a metafictional act of writing, as in *L'Emploi du temps*:

> It is already June 1st, and […] I should have hastened to come back, search for and write down what survives in my memories of the last moments of November, so as not to make this seven month gap enlarge, this gap that I have maintained ever since I began this narrative, this too large a gap that I hoped to reduce quickly, and that I must compress more and more as I go on, and that, day after day, somehow thickens and becomes more opaque (Butor 1956: 129).

Furthermore, these works show the perfect balance between narrative proliferation and structural rigour that is one of the greatest accomplishments of both authors: the enormous expansion of a simple plot, the profusion of facts and the overabundance of details break the linearity of narrative, but at the same time are part of an overall design whose unity is maintained through repetitions, internal cross-references, recurrent themes and motifs. An analogous spatio-temporal organisation of a narrative which is open and closed at the same time can be found in *La Modification*, the sole novel by Butor that makes use of the interior monologue technique (though in the quite unusual form of the second person) and also the one that is most similar to Joyce's masterpiece, considering the choice of the main character's stream of consciousness as unique component of the fictional universe. However, whereas in *Ulysses* the juxtaposition of interior monologue and third-person narration maintains the perspective both internal and external to the character's mind, in *La Modification* the textualization of mental processes becomes pervasive and in a certain way 'incorporates' reality (in the forms of perceived present, remembered past and imagined future), showing how consciousness works through associations, or the way in which spontaneous memories are determined by sensory perceptions:

> Pineapple rock, lemon platt, butter scotch. A sugarsticky girl shovelling scoopfuls of creams for a christian brother. Some school treat. Bad for their tummies. Lozenge and comfit manufacturer to His Majesty the King. God. Save. Our. Sitting on his throne, sucking red jujubes white. A sombre Y. M. C. A. young man, watchful among the warm sweet fumes of Graham Lemon's, placed a throwaway in a hand of Mr Bloom. Heart to heart talks. Bloo… Me? No. Blood of the Lamb. His slow feet walked him riverward, reading. Are you saved? All are washed in the blood of the lamb. God wants blood victim (Joyce 1992: 190).

> Beyond the window, among the vineyards, under the sky turning darker and darker, the high, yellow-painted tiled roof of a church stands on top of a small village. […] Two years ago, or even earlier, since it was still summertime, at the end of August, you were sitting in a third-class compartment similar to this one, on this very same seat near the corridor facing the engine, and in front of you was Cécile, that you hardly knew, and that you had just met at the restaurant, coming back from her holidays (Butor 1957: 56).

Although the linguistic invention and narrative fragmentation that are emblematic of Joyce's style cannot be found in Butor's, these works show similar concerns, in the same way as Butor's last novel *Degrés* (once again an account that is not only extremely detailed but also full of intertextual references) exemplifies their shared ideal of fiction as an autotelic world of words, a metanarrative, all-embracing description of a process of gradual understanding of reality through writing itself.

As shown in this study, the narrative production of Virginia Woolf, Nathalie Sarraute, James Joyce and Michel Butor undoubtedly displays a number of recurring features which can be variously interpreted in terms of continuity between Modernist fiction and the French *Nouveau Roman*, of an explicit influence or reception of a model linking together the authors in question, or even as fortuitous similarities among separate attempts at a radical transformation of the novel, in any case revealing, on a both conceptual and formal level, an essentially analogous way of conceiving narrative that is also emblematic of the twentieth century as a whole.

NOTES

(1) Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

(2) As for what I am aware, there isn't any comparative study concerning Modernist fiction and the *Nouveau Roman*. Scholars confine themselves to passing

reference to Joyce while discussing intertextuality in Butor's novels (as in Lydon 1980, and in De Labriolle 1985) along with some sporadic attempts to connect Woolf's and Sarraute's poetics (cf. on this point Cohn 1964; Noël 1970; Cornwell 1977; Cagnon et Walvoord 1992).

(3) As shown by recent criticism, the boundaries between Modernism and Postmodernism are far from being definite, and their relationship should be assessed in terms of continuity as well as of a radical break. For what concerns Postmodernism, then, we could talk about a "contradictory dependence on and independence from that which temporally preceded it and which literally made it possible. Postmodernism's relation to modernism is, therefore, typically contradictory […]. It marks neither a simple and radical break from it nor a straightforward continuity with it: it is both and neither" (Hutcheon 1988: 18). Furthermore, no less contradictory is the possibility of considering the *Nouveau Roman* as part of the canon; while Fokkema claims that "it is generally accepted now that the *nouveau roman* can be subsumed under the umbrella term of Postmodernism" (Fokkema 1986: 81), Hutcheon considers the new novelists as "examples of late modernist extremism" (Hutcheon 1988: 52), on the grounds that their aesthetics, though not definitely Postmodern, derives and often emphasizes some of the experimental features of Modernist fiction.

(4) The notion of *sous-conversation* (literally meaning "sub-conversation", or unspoken words) is not clearly defined by Sarraute, but rather emerges by contrast to conversation in the same way as the secret source of our inner life is opposed to the appearances and commonplaces by which it comes to the surface, that is, "our conversations, the personality we seem to have, the characters we seem to be in one another's eyes, the stereotyped things we believe we feel as well as those we discover in other people, and the superficial dramatic action constituted by plot, which is nothing but a conventional code that we apply to life" (Sarraute 1956: IV).

(5) As for what I am aware, this is the only extensive study of the reception of Woolf's oeuvre by a non-English reading public, and thus one of the few that briefly mention the influence it has exerted, among many others, on Sarraute's literary output.

(6) Unsurprisingly, it was Charles Mauron – a Provençal writer, critic and translator, friend of Roger Fry – who in 1926 translated the second section of "Time Passes" for the French review *Commerce*, thus anticipating the publication of *To the Lighthouse* by the Hogarth Press the following year. From this pioneering attempt onwards, other works were gradually translated: *Orlando* and *Flush*, once again by Mauron, in 1931 and in 1935 respectively; *Night and Day* in 1933; *The Waves*, thanks to Marguerite Yourcenar, in 1937; *The Years* in 1938; *Jacob's Room* in 1942; *Between the Acts* in 1945; *The Voyage Out* in 1948; *A Room of One's Own* in 1951; *Moments of Being* and *Three Guineas* in 1977. On the importance of translations for the reception of Virginia Woolf in France see Pellan 2002, and Caws 2002.

(7) In an interview with Simone Benmussa, Sarraute gives voice to her appreciation for *Mrs Dalloway*, whose author is defined "a second Proust": "since the beginning I have always loved, as well as never recanted, a second Proust, who affected me deeply. I have always detested psychoanalysis, and I have never, never believed that what Proust had shown us could in the least be diminished by Freud's discoveries. How deeply I loved Virginia Woolf's works, especially *Mrs Dalloway*, her best novel! I have never changed my mind in this regard" (Benmussa 1987: 44).

(8) This issue, which also features the translation of a passage from *Modern Fiction* entitled "Le Nouvel art romanesque. Texte inédit de Virginia Woolf", was intended as a homage, on the twentieth anniversary of her death, to "one of the greatest writers of the first half of the twentieth century", as one can read in a brief introductory article. Furthermore, it seems interesting to notice that Sarraute's opinion remains the same in another interview of some years later: "sometimes people say that my texts remind them of Virginia Woolf's novels, but I could nearly affirm that our works are quite the opposite. It is true that she makes use of images

– and of very beautiful, poetic images indeed – but the consciousnesses that she describes are open, and the whole world plunges into them. In my texts these are not passive, but always in a state of hyperactivity" (Licari 1985: 11).

(9) Emphasising the close connection between sensation and language that is central to her own aesthetics, but also to that of Woolf, Sarraute adds: "what is fiction, if not sensations and perceptions expressed by means of language? There is no novel which is not a psychological novel also" (Villelaur 1961: 3).

(10) As Sheehan reminds us, "her writing articulates not one but two interpretations of experience, as both flux and fragmentation. Life consists of flowing streams of sensation, yet it is also centred in the singular, heterogeneous moment. These two renderings – of vertiginous, wavelike fluidity and atomised, isolated particularity – are […] covariant properties of experience. Like wave-particle dualism, the two modalities do not cancel each other out but exist in tandem, coextensive of each other" (Sheehan 2002: 128).

(11) Cf. Woolf's famous remarks in *Modern Fiction*: "examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms […]. Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? […] let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness" (Woolf 1966: 106-107).

(12) Sarraute describes literary creation as "the movement by which the writer breaks the hard surface of what is visible, makes these new, intact elements arise, assembles them, gives them cohesion, arranges them to create a model that is the literary work itself. The structure of the work, as well as the writer's own style reveal

the nature of such an effort. [...] Most probably, because of this quest, because of this struggle to make visible what is invisible, the literary work, like any work of art, is an instrument of knowledge [...] The sort of reality that a work of art discloses is not of a rational nature. In order to convey it, one should make use of a sensible form. Without such form, communication is impossible, form being precisely the movement by which the invisible reality comes into existence" (Sarraute 1996: 1644-1645).

(13)See especially "Blue and Green", "The Mark on the Wall", "In the Orchard", "Solid Objects" and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection" in Kemp 1993.

(14)For instance, in the following extracts taken from *The Mark on the Wall* and *Tropismes* respectively, both authors focus on a sort of osmosis between the inner and the outer world: "it is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately – but something is getting in the way… Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs? Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing… There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying – 'I'm going out to buy a newspaper'" (Kemp 1993: 60). "And he sensed percolating from the kitchen, humble, squalid, time-marking thoughts, marking time on one spot, always on one spot, going round and round in circles, as if they were dizzy but couldn't stop, as if they felt sick but couldn't stop […] until we are exhausted, until it leaves us out of breath" (Sarraute 1957: 16-17).

(15)This is also mentioned in one of the few critical works dealing with the reception of the Joycean model among the French new novelists: "while Joyce's influence is pervasive for the *nouveaux romanciers*, it is also diffuse. Except for Butor, Joyce is more of an inspiration than an explicit influence; he is one writer, among several, who have helped occasion a new world-picture. […] Much like Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute points to Joyce as a precursor in her critical writings, but only as one precursor among several. […] At the 1975 Paris Joyce Symposium, she refused to talk about Joyce except as an inspiration" (Slote 2004:

383-384). On the importance of translations for the circulation of Joyce's works in France cf. O'Neill 2004.

(16)According to Dettmar, the peculiarity of *Ulysses* consists in its uniqueness, in its defying any attempt at categorisation: "while the novel is obviously one of the pillars of Anglo-American literary modernism, its postmodernism is at the same time bursting out all over. The willful narrative consistently overflows its ostensible mythic framework; the language is increasingly ludic as the narrative progresses; […] *Ulysses* is certainly a modernist classic; but in its playful unwillingness to take itself or its modernist devices too seriously, it is at the same time pregnant with a nascent postmodernism" (Dettmar 1996: 11). Furthermore, it may be interesting to notice that while Hassan identifies *Finnegans Wake* as the first postmodern novel (cf. Hassan 1975), Richardson, who comments on Joyce's works in terms which could also be applied to Butor, writes: "in the realm of the postmodern, the distinction between the real and the unreal is problematized, as are the correlative lines that attempt to separate fiction and nonfiction, history and fabrication, homage and parody, subject and object, self and other, text and world. This extends to the blurring or collapsing of another set of differences in the narration itself between narrator and character, dialogue and monologue, the 'he' and the 'I'. […] Working with this concept of the postmodern – that of the violation of foundational boundaries, both ontological and narratological – we find that the *Wake* indeed incontrovertibly belongs to this grouping. So, for that matter, do many of the later chapters of *Ulysses* […]. As has been observed in the past, *Ulysses* is governed by at least two antithetical aesthetics, one quintessentially modernist, the other defying modernist constraints. […] Part of the material that violates the modernist aesthetic partakes of the postmodern sensibility" (Richardson 2000: 1038-1039).

(17)Both this essay and the one entitled *Esquisse d'un seuil pour Finnegan* (which was also included in the collection *Répertoire I*) are not in the least Butor's sole interventions on the subject matter: in 1966 he took part, together with an international group of scholars, in the first colloquium dedicated entirely to Joyce

(anticipating the first International James Joyce Symposium by one year) sponsored by the Centre Culturel Américain, while two years later he contributed the short piece *Joyce et le roman moderne* to a special issue of the magazine *L'Arc* devoted to Joyce. In 1975 he chaired a session on "Joyce et l'aventure d'aujourd'hui" at the fifth International James Joyce Symposium that was held in Paris, whereas for the celebration of the centenary of Joyce's birth in 1982 by *Le Monde* he composed an essay entitled *La Langue de l'exil*, later included in the collection *Répertoire V*.

(18)For a definition of Joyce's oeuvre as "hypermnesiac machine" see Derrida 1984: 147.

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Mutualità

Riane Eisler, *Il Calice e la Spada – La civiltà della Grande Dea dal Neolitico ad oggi*, Udine, Forum, 2011, pp. 416, € 25,00.
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Lessi *Il Calice e la Spada* di Riane Eisler nella edizione di Pratiche di Parma, nel 1996. Non ricordo come scoprii quel libro, forse fu Antonella Riem a parlarmene già allora. O trovai l'indicazione nei testi di ecologia generale e di teoria della complessità, che allora frequentavo molto: F. Capra, Bateson, Morin, Maturana e Varela, Prigogine e Stengers ecc. *Il Calice e la Spada* mi colpì molto e nel profondo, tanto che lo rimisi subito in gioco palesemente nella didattica universitaria e nei miei scritti. Ricordo che gli studenti che lessero quel libro *strano* mi ringraziarono per averglielo consigliato. L'avevo messo in programma nella lista dei testi a scelta per il colloquio d'esame. Ricordo che lo stesso effetto fece su di me e sui miei allievi, *Atena Nera* di Martin Bernal del 1985, anche questo tradotto e pubblicato in Italia, nel 1991, da Pratiche (1). Due libri non-canonici, e addirittura messi al bando dalla fanfara comitragica della baroníade accademica italiana. Ricordo anche che gli studenti di Lettere antiche, sceglievano di mettere nel loro piano di studi la disciplina da me insegnata, "Letteratura comparata", per leggere Eisler e Bernal e per poterne sapere di più sull'"Antica Europa" – espressione usata da Marija Gimbutas, la grande archeologa, maestra-madre di Eisler – *diversa* da quella insegnata nei manuali universitari canonici; e, infine, di poterne parlare con me.

Il libro di Eisler, e quello di Bernal, si stabilizzarono subito dentro la mia mente e diventarono *landmarks* ineludibili e benvenuti, per me e per gli studenti. Semirette costellari della mia poetica saggistica e didattica. Che vuol dire

"semirette costellari"? Miliardi di semirette siamo tutti noi umani, che sappiamo, anche se non lo sappiamo, di essere la "metà delle luci" nella costellazione generale del cosmo "sempre incipiente", come scrive Wallace Stevens nel breve poema "July Mountain". Dell'altra semiretta di luci e oscurità, non conosciamo le coordinate e le luci, ancora, sappiamo però, che ci stiamo 'in mezzo' volando tutti insieme nel buio immenso della materia, quella Madre assoluta, pensata da Esiodo (2) e poi, come un gruppo di Madri, da Goethe. Le Madri si incontrano nella seconda parte del *Faust*, II, Atto I, nella scena intitolata "Galleria Oscura". Le Madri sono "Dèe che altere dominano nella solitudine". Credo che il loro colore sia *nightblue*/neroazzurro, ma anche notteazzuro, perché no? Questa loro coloritura è proposta nel capitolo XVII, stellare, di "Ithaca", dell'*Ulisse* di James Joyce. Mentre scrivevo questo testo che ora stai leggendo, mi è venuta in mente, alla luce, una immagine di Kafka, contenuta in una lettera a Milena Jesenská del settembre del 1920. Il boemo scrive alla sua amata di averla vista in sogno, "disegnata col gesso nel buio". Il disegno in gesso siamo noi umani, il buio è la materia scura del cosmo ancora "indeterminata" (Anassimandro). Noi umani e le nostre immaginazioni e opere siamo luci da luci, e siamo la metà di tutte le luci: Franz e Milena sono luci, il libro di Eisler, e l'opera della sua curatrice, Antonella Riem, me e voi, siamo luci da luci. Dice il poeta antico, Lucrezio Caro: "… ita res accendent lumina rebus" / così le cose illumineranno sempre le cose. E *Il Calice e la Spada* questo fa, da quando è apparso, nel 1987.

Nella "Introduzione" al suo libro ripubblicato da Forum nel 2011, Eisler dice all'inizio: "Questo libro apre una porta […] Ho dedicato la mia esistenza alla ricerca di questa porta". Sono stato fulminato da questo *incipit*, ora nell'agosto 2012, nel 1996 non ricordo. La porta che Eisler propone è aperta sull'antico, e poi, attraverso una ricerca-azione (33) nel nostro passato ultramillenario che scende fino ad oggi, si apre per servire il futuro, in nome della "gilania", una "eutopia" ancora pensabile per tutti noi e per le nostre discendenze avvenire. "Gilania" vuol dire

partenariato nell'antica società umana mediterranea tra donne e uomini, operanti dentro lo *shawl*/scialle – come scrive Wallace Stevens in poesia – di una condizione comunitaria che 'è' e 'fu' femminile, nel suo contenere e mantenere, e nel creare in ogni momento la condizione sociale serena e industriosa nel tempo della *Old Europe*, quella vista e illuminata da Gimbutas. Gilania antica che generò l'inverso della condizione umana-europea attuale che perdura da 5 millenni. A partire dalle invasioni indo-europee, *kurgan*, nel Mediterraneo e nella *Europa antica*, la coda dell'Eurasia (109 e seguenti), la gilania venne distrutta. Da tanto tempo, e fino ad oggi, quel barbarico regime guerresco e androcentrico delle popolazioni feroci, patriarcali e guerriere che distrusse il regime gilanico per instaurare stati guerrieri squilibrati e invivibili, ci forma come "miracolo superiore" europeo e come "missione" e "fardello dell'uomo bianco" (Kipling 1899). Insieme ai monoteismi maschilisti delle successive religioni armate e tuttora potenti. Il nostro futuro non ci sarà se non ci educheremo alla gilania progressiva e mai morta, fin da ora (337 e seguenti). Molte, persone e idee, infatti, hanno resistito al terrore indoeuropeo nella storia antica e in quella moderna occidentale e medio-orientale. Eisler invita a pensare che ora – se non ora, quando? – è necessario ribellarsi sagacemente, come hanno fatto le femministe, Gandhi e Mandela, e contro il mostruoso potere eccessivo della mente violenta e storta, il "mercato totale", come lo videro già i giovani Marx ed Engels nel *Manifesto* del 1848. Oggi, dopo 165 anni, il *Markt* è al suo culmine, sta rovinando la Terra e il Mondo. Da Markt è diventato Percolato e Mafia, malaffare e distruzione.

Leggere Eisler fa venir voglia di cambiare ora e subito questo mondo assurdo "poeticamente", come disse Édouard Glissant. Eisler ci mostra perché e come fare, mediante i valori antichi e rimossi dell'epoca pacifica e gilanica, che sono ancora vivi, e ora messi in mostra e diffusi con maestria. Oggi viviamo nel peggiore dei mondi possibile, il più globale e ingiusto, frutto avvelenato della storia moderna imposta a tutti i mondi a partire dal magico ventennio del 1492-1522 – anno, quest'ultimo, del primo periplo planetario del globo terracqueo compiuto

da Magellano, che non tornò dal viaggio. Si tratta del frutto più potente, deturpante e inaccettabile, perché imposto ai mondi dagli europei come 'civilizzatori universali'. Ma qualcuno, sempre di più, come abbiamo già indicato, continua a pensare e agire oggi per un futuro migliore: non si tratta, certo, dei filosofi euro-nordamericani, ma dei poeti e dai neo-umanisti caraibici e latino-americani, di quelli africani e australi, degli ecologisti, degli anti-colonialisti – essi lavorano per un oltre neo-umanista, nonostante i *Post-Colonial Studies* anglo-americani e i loro seguaci europei – gli anti-globalizzazione, gli altermondialisti, i primaverili arabi, il popolo del Chapas e Marcos, i ragazzi di *Occupay Wall Street*, i sostenitori della decrescita, i teologi della liberazione rinnegati dai recenti e viventi pontefici romani, gli amici dei popoli indigeni & i popoli indigeni, gli antirazzisti, i migranti & i compagni di strada dei migranti, le coraggiose Pussy Riot russe, i movimenti femministi da due secoli, e altri e tanti. Tutti insieme, donne e uomini, Gloria Alzádua e Giordano Bruno.

Questa non è una recensione corretta, ma non so più scriverle, semmai le abbia sapute scrivere. Questo testo mostra come mi sia arruolato e raccolto, nello scialle ammirevole aperto da Riane Eisler per tutti noi, insieme con i pensieri-azioni e i compagni di strada del mio cammino, che mi sono venuti insieme in mente rileggendo *Il Calice e la Spada*. Eisler mi ha portato anche a ripensare un intrico di pensieri di ora, nel 2012, per ricongiungermi al me che ero nel 1996, e più indietro, nel 1968. Ora sono certamente più capace di pensare esistenzialmente il suo dettato, nonostante non abbia più studenti a cui parlarne.
Saluto Riane Eisler e voi, evocando due poeti, uno del Mondo Antico greco-latino e uno statunitense del secolo XX che parlano dello stare insieme in un *luogo in comune*. Vanno letti come stanno ora su questa pagina, come se fossero in un accordo capovolto rispetto alla cronologia universale, e si completassero a vicenda, mutualmente, per descrivere preziosamente l'immagine di una

condizione umana migliore e possibile, abbastanza simile a quella che ci propone Riane Eisler:

Wallace Stevens
Questo è dunque l'incontro più intenso,
È in tale pensiero che ci raccogliamo
Fuori da ogni indifferenza, in una cosa:

Entro una cosa sola, un solo scialle
Che ci stringiamo intorno, essendo poveri: un calore,
Luce, potere, l'influsso prodigioso
…….
Facciamo un'abitazione nell'aria della sera
Tale che starvi insieme è sufficiente.

Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour
in *The Rock*
ne *Il mondo come meditazione,* trad. e cura di Massimo Bacigalupo, Parma, Guanda 1986

Tito Lucrezio Caro
[…] così l'insieme delle cose si rinnova
sempre, e i mortali vivono mutuamente le cose tra loro in comune
[…] *sic rerum summa novatur*
semper, et inter se mortales mutua vivunt

De rerum natura, II: 75-76

Lucrezio – poeta-filosofo epicureo del primo secolo prima dell'Era Comune (3) – è stato dimenticato in Europa per un millennio e mezzo; Wallace Stevens è valutato come uno dei più grandi poeti anglo-americani del Novecento, ma anche come un compositore filosofico e astratto-meditativo. A noi servono molto per pensare meglio insieme a Eisler. Credo anche che loro abbiano scritto per tutti – non come 'universali' ma da 'mutui' – per le donne e per gli uomini e per tutti gli altri, anche non-umani, come il cane che ti aspetta fiducioso o il gatto che si allontana e non si sa come, sorride. Come Saffo e Emily Dickinson, o Leopardi o Hölderlin. Solo quando dimoriamo in un "conversar cittadino" o diventiamo un colloquio, poetico.

NOTE

(1) Vedi il trattamento giusto dello studio di Bermal da parte del latinista Francesco Stella nel capitolo "Antichità europee" nel manuale di *Letteratura comparata* da me curato, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, II edizione, 2002 (I edizione nel 1999).

(2) Dice Esiodo nella *Teogonia*, che "[…] primo fu il Caos / e poi / Gaia dall'ampio petto […] / e Tartaro nebbioso […] / poi Eros, il più bello tra gli immortali […]" (vv. 116-1120) e poi "da Caos nacquero Erebo e nera Notte / da Notte provennero Etere e Giorno […] / Gaia per primo generò, simile a sé, / Urano stellato […]". Da notare è che Gaia non va a letto con nessuno per generare i suoi tanti figli: le grandi montagne, il mare fecondo, Oceano ecc. In seguito, Gaia giace con Urano, suo figlio, simile a lei. Insieme generano gli dei e l'ultimo tra loro, Crono dai pensieri storti, il più tremendo dei figli.

(3) Nel rispetto delle diverse religioni del mondo, è preferibile utilizzare i termini neutrali E.C. (Era Comune) e p.E.C. (prima dell'Era Comune) rispetto a quelli giudaico-cristiani a.C. (avanti Cristo) e d.C. (dopo Cristo) che pongono l'evento della nascita di Gesù Cristo come unico spartiacque della storia. Stefano

Mercanti, Glossario mutuale in Riane Eisler. 2012. *Il Piacere è Sacro*. Udine: Forum, 660-661.

Armando Gnisci was Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the Department of Italian Studies, University of Roma "La Sapienza". He has taught literature at several European universities and around the world, including Japan, U.S.A., Brasil, Cuba and Argentina. He has published and edited over thirty books, mainly within the field of Comparative Literature, which have been translated into many languages. In 2012 Professor Gnisci was elected member of the Academia Europaea (the Academy of Europe, London).

Stefano Mercanti

In Conversation with Riane Eisler

Cultural historian and evolutionary theorist Riane Eisler talks to *Le Simplegadi* about her vision of new human possibilities and her belief in humanity's capacity for caring and mutuality as an alternative to the violence and domination of much of recorded history. In her ground-breaking works, *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987) and *Sacred Pleasure* (1995), both published in more than 20 languages including the recent Italian re-editions by Udine University Press Forum, she gives evidence of "another history", that of the Neolithic before the violent invasions of pastoralist nomads, in which an equalitarian mode of living was far more central than the patriarchal dominator configuration. This resulted, as Eisler describes, in relations of "linking" rather than rigid "ranking", and what she calls "hierarchies of actualisation" rather than hierarchies of domination. This work provides a new radical perspective on the ways human relationships and institutions were structured and how they can be again structured, ranging from culture, education, and economics to spirituality, sexuality, and family and other intimate relationships.

Stefano Mercanti According to your Cultural Transformation Theory, the evolutionary movement of humanity does not follow a linear path. Originally, in the earliest cradles of civilization, as shown by the archaeological and mythical evidence in *The Chalice and the Blade* and *Sacred Pleasure*, it was more in a partnership direction; not ideal but more peaceful and equitable. Then there was a shift to domination. And now we have reached a crucial system bifurcation where there is an opportunity for transformative social and ideological change, but also the possibility for the dominator system to reconstitute itself in new

institutional and ideological forms. Do you believe that we are progressing enough toward a partnership model?

Riane Eisler We are actually in a period of regression. Yet we *can* move forward. To do so, however, we need an integrated approach.

Modern history has been a spiral upward movement from domination to partnership. That is the good news. The bad news is that this movement has been fiercely resisted and punctuated by periodic dips to the domination side.

Think back only a few hundred years, to the European Middle Ages. While there were some partnership elements, basically it looked like the Taliban with its rigid theocratic controls, its Inquisition with death by torture for so-called "heretics" and "witches", its Crusades or Holy Wars, and its strict subordination of women and children – so much so that theologians even debated whether women, like men, have immortal souls.

Then, over the last centuries more and more people challenged traditions of domination. Through one progressive social movement after another, they challenged the so-called "divinely ordained" rights of kings to rule over their "subjects", of men to rule over the women and children in the "castles" of their homes, of one race to rule over a supposedly "inferior" race, all the way to today's challenge to the once hallowed "conquest of nature" – which at our level of technological development threatens our very survival.

There were many gains. But most of these movements focused on dismantling the top of the dominator pyramid – political, economic, and religious domination in the state or tribe – without adequate attention to the pyramid's foundations: the formative family and gender relations. These are the relations where people learn early on either to respect human rights or to accept human rights violations are normal, and even moral.

So unless we pay attention to these relations, dominator systems will keep rebuilding themselves on these foundations in different forms. These can range from the totalitarian Nazi and Soviet regimes of the early 20th century to the

religious fundamentalism of the 21st – which is actually dominator fundamentalism, because it seeks to push us back to the three core elements of domination systems: an authoritarian family and society, the use of fear and force to maintain control, and the rigid subordination of women and children.

Yet these connections are not visible if we look at societies through the lenses of old social categories such as religious vs. secular, right vs. left, capitalist vs. socialist, Eastern vs. Western, and so forth.

SM You write of patterns that are visible once we use the lenses of the partnership system and the domination system. Can you explain more about that?

RE Consider that a top priority for the repressive and violent Nazis was getting women back into their "traditional" place in a "traditional" family – code words for a top-down, male-dominated, authoritarian family where children learn that it is very painful to question orders, no matter how unjust. When Stalin came to power he too pushed for a return to a male-dominated family. And of course this was the top priority for Khomeini in Iran, as it still is for fundamentalists of all stripes – be they Eastern or Western – who, not coincidentally, also believe in 'holy wars' and authoritarian rule in the state or tribe.

These are all connected, mutually supporting components of dominator systems. Yet, ironically, many people who consider themselves progressives still view violations of women's and children's human rights as "just" women's and children's issues – to be addressed only after 'more important problems' have been resolved.

You would not try to build a house without a plan or blueprint of the whole house – including its foundations. In the same way, we need the social blueprint of the partnership configuration to build a more equitable, caring, and sustainable future. And here too, we have to pay particular attention to building its foundations in the formative relations that are the models (of either partnership or

domination) that children first learn, and that neuroscience tells us affect nothing less than the development of our brains.

SM The tension between dominator and partnership models has deeply conditioned both our public and private spheres. Differences between women and men are still very much emphasised in oppositional ways and seen constantly at war. How can women and men awaken from this dominator trance and develop a 'fully human' consciousness where both masculinity and femininity are expressed as integral?

RE An important aspect of the movement toward partnership is leaving behind the old dominator socialisation that put women and men in straitjackets, constricting each of our human potentials. For instance, leadership is supposed to be a male trait. Well, women can be leaders. But if a woman gives directions, if she is assertive, she is under the old system unfeminine, a "ball-breaker". The other side of the coin is that if men are caring, if men are sensitive, they are devalued as "effeminate", as "sissies", not only by other men but often by women.

This kind of thinking is indeed part of the "dominator trance" – and so is the notion that when we talk of gender it is a matter of women against men or men against women. Actually, we are talking about something fundamental to social health that affects girls and boys, men and women, in all aspects of our lives. But we cannot see this through the lenses of conventional categories such as right or left, religious or secular, eastern or western, and so on.

By contrast, the contrasting social configurations of the dominator system and the partnership system show the key importance of how the roles and relations of the female and male halves of humanity are constructed. We can then connect the dots – and make lasting progress.

As long as boys and men learn to equate 'real masculinity' with violence and control – be it through 'heroic' epics, war toys, or violent TV, films, and video games – can we realistically expect to end the arms build-ups that are today

bankrupting our world and the terrorism and aggressive warfare that in our age of nuclear and chemical warfare or terrorism threaten our survival? As long as women are only a small minority in policy and decision-making, can we seriously talk about "representative democracy"?

Can we realistically expect to end racism, anti-Semitism, and other ugly isms as long as children learn to equate difference – beginning with the fundamental difference between female and male – with superiority or inferiority, with dominating or being dominated, with being served or serving? And when we learn this early on, before our brains and our critical faculties are fully formed, that way of seeing difference can then automatically be applied to a different race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on.

SM Your book *Sacred Pleasure* looks at spirituality and sexuality, as well as romantic love, parenting, and just about everything else, from this new perspective. Can you elaborate?

RE My multidisciplinary, cross-cultural, historical research shows that how a society constructs the roles and relations of the two basic halves of humanity – women and men – not only affects women's and men's individual life options; it affects families, education, religion, politics, economics, and yes, sexuality and spirituality.

That is one of the key themes of *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body*. Masters and Johnson and other sexologists write of the "pleasure bond" as conducive to mutuality in sexual relations. But this would disrupt rankings of domination, so male control of the female body is integral to the construction of sexuality in societies that orient closely to the dominator system.

One very powerful mechanism to achieve this is the erotisation of domination. For example, the medieval Church made it a sin to have sexual intercourse in any way other than the man-on-top/woman-on-bottom position, a teaching still exported centuries later by Christian missionaries – hence the term "missionary position".

A related strategy is to link sex with violence, as we see in a plethora of cultural images – from all the stories and classical paintings of rapes (Lucrecia, Europa, and so on) to much of contemporary pornography and 'entertainment'. This erotisation of violence not only serves to maintain male dominance; it reinforces a male socialization for all kinds of violence in a variation of the famous Pavlov findings that when dogs are conditioned to associate food with a ringing bell they will salivate just from the ring of the bell. And of course, violence is integral to dominator systems, as rigid rankings of domination must ultimately be maintained through fear and force.

Still another way sexuality is distorted in dominator systems is to vilify women's sexuality as dangerous to men. This is a common dogma in both Eastern and Western religions, which equate man with spirit and woman with the supposedly sinful and inferior body.

All this is in sharp contrast to earlier more partnership traditions where sexuality and spirituality were linked. We vividly see this linking in prehistoric art of the "sacred marriage" – and even as late as the Mesopotamian Hymns of Inanna, the revered Goddess of Love and Procreation, celebrating her sexual union with Dumuzi not only in romantic terms but as part of the annual renewal of nature through her life-giving and nurturing powers.

That today many women and men are trying to reclaim these ancient traditions is part of the movement toward partnership.

SM In your books, including the most recent *The Real Wealth of Nations* (2008), you have emphasised the partnership values of caring, equality and empathy as the core elements of any fundamental cultural and economic transformation. You suggest that our historical models of economics came out of a system of domination. What do you mean?

RE: We inherited economic systems in which, basically, those at top are privileged and those at the bottom get the droppings from the table. If we re-examine the

critique of capitalism as unjust, violent, and exploitive, we see that it is in reality a critique of dominator systems – be they ancient or modern, Western or Eastern, feudal, monarchic, or totalitarian. Long before capitalist billionaires amassed huge fortunes, Egyptian pharaohs and Chinese emperors hoarded their nations' wealth. Indian potentates demanded tributes of silver and gold while lower castes lived in abject poverty. Middle Eastern warlords pillaged, plundered, and terrorised their people. European feudal lords killed their neighbours and oppressed their subjects. A system of top-down rankings has also characterized the two large-scale applications of the socialist "dictatorship of the proletariat": the former Soviet Union and China. Both turned out to be authoritarian, violent, and destructive of nature. And while they alleviated some economic disparities, they were hardly equalitarian (1).

We have to go beyond these old approaches. This does not mean we should discard everything from capitalism and socialism. We need both markets and central planning. But to effectively address our problems, we have to go further and deeper.

A first step is a full-spectrum economic map that no longer excludes the life-sustaining economic sectors: the natural economy, the household economy, and the community volunteer economy. Then we can build an economics of partnerism, a caring economy that gives real visibility and value to the most important human work: caring for people, starting in early childhood, and caring for nature – matters that conventional economic analyses and theories ignore.

SM Caring is generally considered 'soft', and therefore economically inefficient. Yet in your work you show that this is a misconception. Can you comment on this?
RE People are not used to seeing caring and economy together, but if we think about it, this is a reflection of how accustomed we are to having uncaring values guide economics. We have also been socialised to think that caring is 'soft', 'feminine' – and hence *not* economically effective. In reality, as documented in

my book *The Real Wealth of Nations*, caring policies and practices are very economically effective. And this is especially the case as we move from the industrial to the post-industrial era, when investment in human capacity development is essential for economic success. Not only that, studies show that caring companies do better. For example, companies regularly listed in *Working Mother* or *Fortune500* as the best companies to work for have a substantially higher return to investors.

Investing in caring also pays extremely well for nations. This is why current "austerity" measures are so wrong. We must invest in people, and cuts in child-care, education, health, and so forth are economically suicidal in the long term. It is a matter of priorities, of values – which is why to change economic systems we have to also change the larger culture.

SM You write of the movement toward partnership being opposed by a "hidden system of gendered valuations". Can you elaborate?

RE Most people still do not think of gender in relation to economics. But this is beginning to change. For example, there is a growing recognition of a strong correlation between the status of women and a nation's quality of life.

For instance, a study based on statistics from 89 nations conducted by the Center for Partnership Studies, *Women, Men, and the Global Quality of Life,* found that in significant respects the status of women can be a better predictor of general quality of life than Gross Domestic Product or GDP, the conventional measure of a nation's economic health. Similarly, the annual World Economic Forum's Gender Gap reports show that countries with a low gender gap are more economically successful.

An obvious reason for this is that women are half the population. But there are systemic reasons – including that as long as the female half of humanity, with whom values such as caring and non-violence are associated, remains subordinate and excluded from social governance, so also will these values.

Also growing is the recognition that we cannot realistically end poverty without addressing the fact that the mass of the world's poor and the poorest of the poor are women and children – and that a major reason for this is that women perform most of the unpaid care work. Not only that, both psychology and neuroscience show that our economic future heavily depends on care and education – hence fiscal support for the care-giving work performed in *both* the market and the household economic sectors is a nation's most cost-effective investment.

When I recently spoke at the United Nations General Assembly in a session on harmony with nature, I pointed out that we cannot realistically expect policies and practices that care for nature as long as caring, starting in early childhood, and keeping a clean and healthy home environment continue to be devalued because they are associated with women and the 'soft' or 'feminine'. What we are really talking about here are the most important human activities, without which we cannot have a sustainable future.

SM In establishing the behavioural building blocks that are needed for partnership relationships, education plays a crucial role as it can effectively accelerate "the pain to pleasure shift", as you call it in your book *Sacred Pleasure*. Also, access to quality education is an important aspect of what you call the "economy of caring". Yet universities are becoming more and more like vending sites for multinational corporations, and the Humanities are in danger of being lost. What should be particularly valued in the new universities of the future?

RE In my book *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century,* I propose that caring for life – for self, others, and nature – be part of education from pre-school to graduate school. And, of course, the humanities are integral to education. It is a cold and sterile life without literature, art, and music, without feelings, creativity, and a sense of meaning. Yet, as *Tomorrow's Children* points out, the canon of the humanities perpetuates many aspects of dominator

systems, not only in its lack of diversity but in not critically examining beloved philosophers and other writers who present dominator systems as the only alternative, and often glorify domination and violence. The good news is that this is beginning to change, for example through the work of the Partnership Studies scholars at the University of Udine (2). The universities of the future need a more partnership-oriented perspective. The humanities curriculum should include the importance of respect for human rights in both the so-called public sphere of politics and economics and the private sphere of family and other intimate relations. And of course to merit its name, the humanities must give equal importance to both halves of humanity: male and female.

SM As a social activist you are the director of the Center for Partnership Studies (CPS, California), a non-profit organisation that is linked with numerous initiatives, educational programmes, associations and institutions. What are the upcoming activities you are promoting that people should know about?

RE Our CPS programs offer research and education. The Center's Caring Economy Campaign (CEC) focuses on changing economic policies, practices, and measurement. One of its aims is the adoption of more inclusive and accurate measures of economic health by bringing together leading economists to develop Social Wealth economic indicators that show the economic value of caring for people and nature.

A second part of the campaign is building a coalition of organizations representing women, children, faith communities, think tanks, sustainable businesses, and other groups already working for more caring policies and practices. A third part is education, especially our online webinar Caring Economy Leadership Trainings that bring together people from all over the globe. There is information on all this at http://www.caringeconomy.org as well as educational materials you can download and use.

This campaign is ever more urgent as automation, robotics, and soon artificial intelligence, continue to take over people's jobs. The only viable solution is an economic system that gives visibility and real value to the work only humans can do: the work of caring for other humans, particularly our children and our growing elderly population, as well as for our increasingly threatened natural environment.

Our other major program is the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (SAIV) that I co-founded with Nobel Peace Laureate Betty Williams with the aim of ending traditions of violence in families, especially the global pandemic of violence against women and children that, as we move toward partnership, is finally gaining attention.

There are excellent resources for SAIV, including the "Caring and Connected Parenting Guide" that can be downloaded for free at http://www.saiv.net.

One of our goals is engaging spiritual and religious leaders to finally take a strong stand against this intimate violence. This is essential not only because this violence every year blights, and all too often takes, the lives of millions of children and women, but because if family relations based on chronic violations of human rights are considered normal and moral, they provide models for such violations in all relations. If these relations are violent, children learn that violence from those who are more powerful toward those who are less powerful is acceptable as a way of dealing with conflicts or problems – and they learn this not only on an emotional and mental level, but on a neural level.

Our latest initiative is a film now under development based on my life and work, and you can find information at http://tiroirafilms.wix.com/chalice-or-blade#!home/mainPage. You can also find resources about other activities, including how you can start a book study and action group, at the CPS website http://www.partnershipway.org.

I invite readers to use these resources, and join with me in the exciting, urgently needed enterprise of helping to build that more caring and sustainable partnership future we so need and want.

NOTES

(1) Equalitarian denotes social relations in a partnership society where women and men (and "masculine" and "feminine") are accorded equal value. It differs from the more conventional term "egalitarian" as it traditionally describes equality between men and men (as the works of Locke, Rousseau, and other "rights of man" philosophers, as well as modern history, evidence). For more details see the partnership glossary: http://www.partnershipway.org/about-cps/foundational-concepts/the-challenge-of-language/SACRED%20PLEASURE%20glossary%201oct.pdf/view

(2) Partnership Studies Group (PSG, Udine University): http://all.uniud.it/?page_id=195.

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