

COLONIAL LANGUAGE AND POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTIC HYBRIDITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation project applies community-specific linguistic studies to various postcolonial texts, thereby offering readers an alternative way of analyzing the patterns of language usage in postcolonial literature. I use linguistic studies to help treat these communities not as they were—long-time colonies of the British Empire—but rather as they are now: multilingual societies that serve as gateways into complex webs of identity construction and language usage. In this vein, I approach postcolonial literature in relation to: (1) how the texts use language to either include or exclude others; (2) how the characters interpret and respond to the mix of original and new languages; (3) how language usage either deters from or solidifies the sense of belonging together on the part of colonial natives; and (4) how language functions as a force in each text considered.

The particular linguistic studies I use have not generally been applied to literature, but I show that these theories can be mapped onto literary texts in very compelling ways. Because language is constructed differently in different regions, it only makes sense that linguistic identity has to be studied within specific societies; Africa's multilingualism, for example, has often been described as on par with European multilingualism, yet this is theoretically misleading because whereas European multilingualism involves several written languages, the African context involves only a few written languages (such as Yoruba and Gikuyu) existing alongside oral languages founded on oral cultures and

transmitted orally. Given, then, that this dissertation examines literary texts through the lens of local language, its findings are useful in that they reveal widely disparate modes of colonial resistance that tend to challenge more traditional postcolonial readings and interpretations.

I think that theories of reception and of the rhetoric of fiction
are crying out for the solidity and precision of linguistic description.

Roger Fowler, *Literature as Social Discourse*, 34.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation, *Colonial Language and Postcolonial Linguistic Hybridity*, applies community-specific linguistic studies to various postcolonial texts, attempting thereby to offer literary scholars an alternative way of analyzing language patterns in postcolonial literature. I use linguistic studies to help treat these communities not as they were—long-time colonies of the British Empire—but rather as they are now: multilingual societies that serve as gateways into complex webs of identity construction and language usage.

The particular linguistic studies I use have not generally been applied to literature,¹ but I show that these theories can be mapped onto literary texts in very useful and compelling ways, particularly if one considers that postcolonial literary theory tends to see the world in a way that resembles the interests of Western power structures. Arif Dirlik argues that Westernized, academic readings, when applied to postcolonial texts, do nothing more than reenact the tenuous relationship of the colonizer and the colonized.

He writes:

¹ Roger Fowler's text, *Literature as Social Discourse*, provides very interesting exploratory studies that do, in fact, analyze the language of literary works through the context of linguistic field research. Fowler, for example, applies Basil Bernstein's sociolinguistic construct of the "restricted code" to the works of D.H. Lawrence, and he uses M.A.K. Halliday's concept of "anti-language" to analyze the work of Anthony Burgess and William Burroughs. As far as I am aware, however, no similar methodology has been applied to literature that is postcolonial in nature.

Postcolonialists see the world in ways that resemble the interests of the United States and the European powers much more than they do their peers at home: the term postcolonial, understood in terms of its discursive thematics, *excludes from its scope most of those who inhabit or hail from postcolonial societies*. [...] Postcolonial discourse is an expression not so much of agony over identity, as it often appears, but of newfound power [on the part of the first-world intellectual] (337-339; emphasis added).

To escape this powerful bind, wherein all academic postcolonial theory resembles nothing more than the interests of the First World, linguist Eric Anchimbe argues that we must abandon “The Empire Writes Back” approach to postcolonial studies, which generally focuses on identifying a Center from which the postcolonial perspective can speak, in favor of what he calls “community-specific approaches” (2). The goal here is that by positioning these theories in widely disparate regions, which Anchimbe calls “postcolonial spaces,” one is arguably more able to counter Dirlik’s logic, effectively *including* “most of those who inhabit or hail from postcolonial societies” in the academic theories we are positing (Dirlik 569).

What’s more, because language is constructed differently in different regions, it only makes sense that linguistic identity has to be studied within specific societies; Africa’s multilingualism, for example, has often been described as on par with European multilingualism, yet this is theoretically misleading because whereas European multilingualism involves several written languages, the African context involves only a few written languages (such as Yoruba and Gikuyu) existing alongside oral languages founded on oral cultures and transmitted orally.

The idea of grounding one’s research in community-specific theories was first introduced to postcolonial studies by Frantz Fanon. As a Caribbean-born, French-trained

psychoanalyst, Fanon performed psychological case studies in regions as varied as France, the Caribbean, but especially Algeria, in order to detail the effects of racism on an individual's psyche. By dedicating half of his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, to the actual study of the colonized mind, Fanon presents a damning indictment of the institution of Empire-building. Articulating the damaging effects of internalized racism on two newly decolonized regions of Africa, Fanon writes:

The national bourgeoisie of [Saharan Africa and North Africa], who have assimilated to the core the most despicable aspects of the colonial mentality, take over from the Europeans and lay the foundations for a racist philosophy that is terribly prejudicial to the future of Africa. Through its apathy and mimicry it encourages the growth and development of racism that was typical of the colonial period (*BSWM* 108).

This sentiment parallels a stronger charge Fanon marshals later in *The Wretched of the Earth*: “The native intellectual accepted the cogency of [...Western] ideas and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greco-Latin pedestal” (38). In these passages, the first from *Black Skin, White Masks*—a work, incidentally, that the author introduces with the telling disclaimer, “this book is a clinical study”—Fanon offers a psychological look at what he identifies as a certain complex, a certain psychic structure, that determines both the identity of the colonial subject and his complicity in the colonial enterprise itself.

Employing a similar research strategy, linguist Eric Anchimbe and his researchers set out to study the specific linguistic patterns of postcolonial peoples in regions as diverse as Africa (specifically Cameroon, Kenya, and Nigeria), Asia (specifically India and Sri Lanka), Ireland, the Americas, and the Caribbean. Their findings are published in

Anchimbe's extremely useful study, *Linguistic Identity in Postcolonial Multilingual Spaces*. According to Anchimbe, the need for community-specific approaches to these regions is necessitated by:

[D]iscrepancies between European models and postcolonial spaces, such as: written vs. oral cultures and languages; group-based vs. individual-based priorities; individual vs. group power relations; age vs. rightful claim to territory; home-used vs. official plus home-used languages; and multi-identity and multilingualism vs. mono-identity and monolingualism ("Linguistic Identity" 4).

Given that this dissertation examines literary texts through this lens of local language, its findings are particularly useful in that they reveal widely disparate modes of colonial resistance that tend to challenge more mainstream postcolonial readings and literary interpretations.

Certainly there are existing foundations for what Christian Mair calls "literary sociolinguistics" in the theory of literature. From Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes to Georg Lukács and Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, theoreticians have attempted to discover homologies between novelistic language structures and the cultural context in which a work is produced. Bakhtin writes that "the primary stylistic project of the novel as a genre is to create images of languages" (qtd. in Mair, "Methodological" 11). He goes on, "the novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era, that is, all the era's languages that have any claim to being significant; the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia" (qtd. in Mair, "Methodological" 110). In "A Methodological Framework for Research on the use of Nonstandard Language in Fiction," Mair outlines the many ways that Bakhtin "repeatedly hints at the interrelations between language variation and changes in narrative perspective," and he finds it

“gratifying to note that Bakhtin himself seems to expect that the result of linguistic research will provide the basis for the proper analysis of novelistic style” (110).

Speaking of the foundation that linguistic analysis can give to literary studies, Bakhtin writes:

Stylistic analysis encounters a whole series of difficulties, especially when it deals with works from distant times and alien languages, where our artistic perception cannot rely for support on a living feel for a language. In such a case (figuratively speaking) the entire language—as a consequence of our distance from it—seems to lie on one and the same plane: we cannot sense in it any three-dimensionality or any distinction between levels and distances. Here historic-linguistic research into the language systems and styles available to a given era (social, professional, generic, tendentious) will aid powerfully in re-creating a third dimension for the language of the novel, will help us to differentiate and find the proper distances within the language (qtd. in Mair, “Methodological” 111).

Such a passage makes obvious Bakhtin’s understanding of the link between linguistic structure and stylistic function. In Mair’s words, Bakhtin recognizes that the relationship between linguistics and literature is not “direct, predictable and stable but mediated, so that the same form can have different expressive values depending on the text, context, or genre it occurs in, and that it is these mediating levels of textual organization on which the systemic study of literary style has to be founded” (“Methodological” 111).

In an attempt to contextualize my discussion of linguistic structure and stylistic literary function, I give considerable attention to the literary sociolinguistics of Roger Fowler, one of the earliest writers to recognize the potential of Bakhtin’s ideas for the development of linguistic criticism and the sociolinguistic stylistics of prose. In his work, *Literature as Social Discourse*, Fowler identifies several problems with more

traditional applications of discourse analysis and language theory, and these are summarized by Mair in the following passages:

According to Fowler, stylistic analysis which exclusively concentrates on the phonetic, syntactic and lexical patterns to be observed in a literary text is seriously flawed because it uncritically takes over two problematical premises propagated by some influential schools in literary criticism. The literary work is seen as an autonomous verbal object independent of its historical and social context, and its literary quality is seen to reside in its complex and idiosyncratic linguistic structure (“Methodological” 115).

For Fowler, then:

True advances in the linguistic criticism of literature require an extension of scope. If concepts and methods developed in textlinguistics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics are taken seriously [...], literature is revealed as social discourse, the above-mentioned two basic assumptions are no longer sacrosanct but negotiable in interdisciplinary debate, and the prose writer’s art can be appreciated for what it is—exercising individual creativity on the basis of the meaning potential inherent in existing genres, styles and codes (Mair, “Methodological” 115).

This dissertation thus responds both to Bakhtin’s argument for what we would call “interdisciplinary research” and Fowler’s claims regarding the need to extend the scope of sociological-literary linguistic discourse. More specifically, however, the chapters in this dissertation are designed to participate in the research agenda outlined in the March of 2000 issue of *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, which devoted a special issue to the topic of “Orientalism, Linguistics, and Postcolonial Studies.” Editors Kingsley Bolton and Christopher Hutton introduce their collection by acknowledging that “given the centrality of questions of language to both literary studies and to issues of race and identity, remarkably little attention has been paid to academic linguists within postcolonial studies” (1). Bolton and Hutton argue for “the relevance of debates within postcolonial studies, literary theory, and postmodernism for linguistics;

and for the importance of linguistics in many of the key areas of debate within postcolonial theory” (2).

It is my claim that literary sociolinguistics, of the type that is advocated within this dissertation, leads to a deeper understanding of both the “style” and “structure” of postcolonial literature. My research reveals that such an interdisciplinary approach results in a greater understanding of the varieties of language used within a text (particularly where—as in the case of texts written in geographically or culturally distant communities—such information is difficult to come by) and produces better descriptions of the conscious rhetorical and narrative strategies many authors use to infuse nonstandard (or precolonial) dialects into written texts. This dissertation provides, above all, a study on the effects of colonial language, and while I am aware that colonial influences and the processes of linguistic hybridity do enter metropolitan areas and languages (a topic that I broach in my discussion of Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*, wherein I examine the effects of colonial language on British English), the chapters herein focus necessarily on the impact that such hybridization has on the language practices of pre- and postcolonial regions. The chapters within this collection consequently offer a comprehensive overview of what purposes language variety can serve in postcolonial fiction, of how these languages interact with other constitutive elements of textual organization (such as narrative perspective and orality) and postcolonial theory (such as hybridity), and how sociolinguistic conventions play out in how language issues are approached.

Theoretical Orientation

Five community-specific linguistic studies provide the theoretical orientation for this dissertation. What follows is a brief description of the individual studies as well as a summary of how the studies directly apply to the literary texts at hand.

Linguistic Privacy

Thomas B. Klein—in his very useful study, *Linguistic Identity, Agency, and Consciousness in Creole*—examines the dynamics of identity construction to determine precisely what “markers of belonging” exist when one aligns oneself with a specific linguistic community (312). Klein uses linguistic field research to show precisely how postcolonial populations use their own subject agency to respond to the imposition of a colonial tongue. Klein shows that these populations are very much aware of all that is “diminished or lost” when native tongues are replaced by the language of the colonizer, and thus he analyzes the privacy issues and the code-switching efforts that take place in such politicized and polarized environments (32). As a result of the subject response in Klein’s study, he is able to conclude that, “Dialects and minority languages survive and thrive in the face of colonial language because they function as markers of belonging, and express a sense of solidarity within the speech community” (315). Klein’s words here certainly offer a telling observation: that while dominant, colonial languages may be present in postcolonial societies—and are used for official purposes in, say, government or education—minority languages continue to foster a sense of belonging in the community and presumably a sense of resistance (or at least conscious group distinctions,

as the “abrogationist” philosophy would have us believe²), and this results in a kinship that is not locatable in the utterances of an imposed tongue.

Chapter 1, “*He does not understand our culture*”: *Linguistic Privacy and the Politics of Abrogation in Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart*, examines Achebe’s text in relation to postcolonial appropriationist writings, which tend to blend indigenous and Western discourses in an attempt to produce an Other code—a code that is hybrid in nature and is neither completely detached from its African nor its European sources. The hybridized nature of Achebe’s work has been repeatedly posed, of course, but I use this chapter to show that his narrative technique is still far from being addressed in a satisfactory way. My concern in this chapter is thus with the ways that the narrative strategy of *Things Fall Apart* does not adhere to the codes that assimilationist theorists, such as Bill Ashcroft, advance.

Instead, I argue that throughout *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses a narrative version of Klein’s “linguistic privacy” in order to guard native Igbo language from dilution, and, in essence, to dismantle the co-existence of colonial and indigenous language; he does this, I show, by removing traditional Igbo speech patterns from the text once the white man enters the scene in the second and third parts of the novel. Essentially this linguistic practice allows Achebe to do very much what abrogationists, like Fanon and Ngũgĩ, profess: indeed, he preserves—and speaks to the necessity of sanctifying—Igbo as an African indigenous language.

² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin define this stance as “a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ [language] usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in ... words” (37). It is, in short, the “abrogation or denial of the privilege of ‘English’ ... and involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication” (37).

Language Change

Speaking to the notion of “identity alignment,” Lisa Lim and Umberto Ansaldo discuss, in their article, “Identity Alignment in the Multilingual Space,” the ways in which language is linked with identity. They note that when there is a shift away from an original language—or when one language is replaced by another as the primary means of communication—the classic interpretation is that a crucial part of one’s identity is also forsaken. In contrast, the authors argue that this very shift “can also be viewed as positive agency on the part of the community of speakers” (219). According to the authors, the very act of choosing, of enlisting one’s agency, ensures that the speaker is able to preserve and represent his or her position by a concept they call “identity alignment” (232). Here, the speaker acknowledges but does not contest his or her *imposed*, colonial identity but rather maintains his or her *presumed* ethnic, precolonial identity. And in so doing, the speaker becomes a member of an assumed multilingual—and global—community and is, in essence, empowered through that kinship.

Chapter 2, *Language Shift in Friel’s Translations: The “Self is Perceived as Otherness,”* applies Lim and Ansaldo’s findings to Brian Friel’s drama *Translations*. Through this unusual pairing, I am able to argue that, rather than viewing the communicative shifts in multilingual postcolonial societies solely as a loss, scholars should begin to think about language dynamics also in terms of the empowerment that multicultural associations provide.

Translations reveals, I argue, that while language remains a sensitive issue, it is, most of all, an always-changing semiotic resource that allows groups of individuals to

come together. It allows individuals and groups of speakers to be empowered through their linguistic identities. It enables colonized nations to uphold cultural specificities while acknowledging global diversities. And I show that in Friel's Ireland, such a freeplay of multiplicity definitely holds sway.

Linguabridity

In his article, "Linguabridity: Redefining Linguistic Identities among Children in Urban Areas," linguist Eric Anchimbe coins the term *linguabridity* (combining language and hybridity), and he uses this term to refer to people—particularly children—who grow up speaking two languages and belonging to two, often competing or conflicting, cultures.

Anchimbe is clear in his assertion that "linguabridity affects especially children and not adults," and he cites his own field research to discuss the ways in which adults "are involved in a drama of identity opportunism in which they adopt the features of the group they want to identify with or benefit from" ("Linguabridity" 67). On the contrary, "children grow up being unable to acutely identify with one group or another. They grow up with the ability to switch but are not actually switching—rather they are expressing the identity that is theirs, the one they grow up with" (Anchimbe, "Linguabridity" 67).

Chapter 3, "*It is better to eat with both hands for a while*": Kipling's *Kim* and the *Linguabridity of a Child*, employs Eric Anchimbe's discussion of linguabridity and identity opportunism to show the ways in which Kim, Kipling's child protagonist, fluctuates between three distinct cultural and ethnic identities. I show that, unlike the other adult characters in the novel, Kim fluctuates between these identities openly and

without restraint. This is because, as Eric Anchimbe argues, children lack a unique root identity “from which opportunism among adult springs” (“Linguabridity” 75). I thus show how Kim fits Anchimbe’s definition of a “perfect linguabrid” in that, despite “societal pressure to choose one official identity,” he is “actually unable to do so because by birth” he straddles separate cultures and identities (“Linguabridity” 78). Kim understands what no other character in the novel can fathom: that antithetical notions of hybridized identities dissolve when (1) society no longer feels compelled to differentiate between the co-existence of cultures in one individual, and (2) when individuals no longer see the need to spontaneously change or adapt certain characteristics in order to feel more secure among majority groups.

It seems to me that such a theory of hybridity offers a very viable solution to some of the imbalances and tensions most commonly outlined in mainstream postcolonial theory, and, as we see with *Kim*, when this interpretation is applied to the literature of postcolonial regions, many long-held assumptions about identity construction are challenged.

Hybridity as Cultural Cannibalism

Roy Bendor begins his discussion of language and hybridity with an apt metaphor: cannibalism. Grounding his research methodologies in the precolonial Tupi tribe of the Brazilian rainforest, Bendor comments on the tribe’s cannibalistic tendencies, and notes that the “cannibal’s ability to digest his enemies and absorb their power while remaining distinctively autonomous serve[s] as a potent allegory to what [the hybrid seeks] to accomplish: absorb European contemporary culture while remaining distinctly

[a member of one's own ethnic group]; resist European cultural imperialism while maintaining the ability to borrow from its ideas, motifs, and styles" (265).

Bendor contends that his theory provides an "alternative to the typical Western understanding of hybridity," in that it is "less opaque and ambivalent and more relational, processual, and contextual" (266). While theories of hybridity, the likes of which Homi Bhabha espouses, allow the colonized to negotiate and reclaim a host of dynamic identities (linguistic or otherwise), Bendor argues that a theory has yet to be espoused that provides concrete examples of how the emancipating processes of hybridity may be exploited to create new modes of cultural expression and identity creation. In short, Bhabha talks about agency and change, but he never gives readers a specific illustration as to how this change actually occurs. The problem with this approach, as Bendor sees it, is that it overlooks the role of "subject agency" in the process of hybridity; as such, scholars must transition to thinking of hybridity in terms of *specific* processes rather than *abstract* states of being.

Chapter 4, "*Resembling neither comfort nor hell, but falling somewhere between the two*": *Cannibalism and Cultural Hybridity in Caryl Phillips's Cambridge*, incorporates Bendor's model in order to suggest an alternative way of understanding hybridity. Bendor claims that the ability of the colonial subject to cannibalize or pilfer from the dominant colonial discourse speaks to the way that the marginalized subject is able to disrupt the colonial system by a process of being both inside and outside that very culture. Because the colonizing movement must, paradoxically, create a group of hybrid beings to ensure the program's success—and then destroy those very hybrids when the

threat of supplantation becomes too real—the colonial subject is placed both inside and outside the society at hand and this, in turn, makes cultural cannibalism a “telling cultural signifier or a lens through which the construction and maintenance of cultural identities may be interrogated” (270).

Phillips’s text is also important in that both the narratives of Emily Cartwright and Cambridge work within the varying models of cannibalism Bendor offers in “On Cannibalists and Sociolinguists.” As this chapter shows, Emily’s narration aligns with the nineteenth century’s discursive use of actual cannibalism to solidify boundaries and to produce differentiations that will help validate the colonial social mechanism of repression. The character of Cambridge, on the other hand, performs Bendor’s model of cultural cannibalism, in that as he intentionally ingests certain aspects of European culture, his hybrid being begins to envision the dissolution of existing cultural—even racial—differentiations. This process of hybridization, I argue, ultimately poses a real threat to the colonial system and has the potential to help dislodge over time the edifice of Empire. I conclude by contending that Phillips’s work imagines the possibility of a heterogeneous community that is, in Derrida’s terms, *à venir* [to come].

Language Crossing

In his article, “Language Crossing and the Problematisation of Ethnicity Socialisation,” sociolinguist Ben Rampton defines language crossing as follows: “Language crossing involves code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language that they are using (code switching into varieties that are not generally thought to belong to them)” (485). He goes on to say that

“this kind of switching involves a distinct sense of movement across social or ethnic boundaries and it raises issues of legitimacy which, in one way or another, participants need to negotiate in the course of their encounter” (485). The implication of such a statement is that while crossers may somewhat successfully navigate the boundaries between languages, the cultural barriers they have to traverse are, for the most part, impenetrable. Thus, language crossers are highly conscious of their language use (by which I mean mainly nonstandard language use), and, as a result, the language used by crossers tends to come across as formal, controlled, guarded, artificial—in a word, *inauthentic*.

By focusing on the context around which language crossing occurs, Rampton concludes that “crossing is not an unconstrained form of expression, for it generally only occur[s] in moments, activities, and relationships in which the constraints of ordinary social order [are] relaxed and normal social relations [cannot] be taken for granted” (500). Rampton identifies a few distinct platforms upon which individuals can safely code-cross: in response to a perceived injustice; in games, joke, or jest; and in the form of performance art.

In Chapter 5, “*We are a divided people, aren’t we?*” *The Politics of Multicultural Language and Dialect Crossing in Zadie Smith’s White Teeth*, I argue that the majority of Smith’s characters do not have access to the multiculturalism that many scholars and critics see in the text. As a result, some of the novel’s most prominent examples of language crossing involve both Bengali and English characters *crossing over* into languages other than their own in an attempt to perform identity and to negotiate

community boundaries. I ultimately show that the moments of language crossing within the novel are indeed limited to a prescribed set of conditions and choreographed social interactions, and, as such, the novel confirms Rampton's findings: that "inherited ethnicity" seems to be something that is continually "treated as a basic feature of routine social reality," and, in this way, it is improper to view language crossing "as a runaway deconstruction of ethnicity" (501).

In Summary

The brief coda of this dissertation project takes the implications of the above readings to argue that the relationship between linguistics and literary study may be symbiotic, and that—as Bakhtin and Fowler, Bolton, and Hutton argue—linguists and literary scholars need to collaborate more in the investigation of cultural studies.

CHAPTER 2

“HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND OUR CUSTOMS”:
LINGUISTIC PRIVACY AND THE POLITICS OF
ABROGATION IN CHINUA ACHEBE’S
*THINGS FALL APART*³

There currently exists a body of descriptive literature—ranging from abstract principles espoused by literary theorists to concrete literary studies describing language usage in individual works by African writers—that effectively outlines the complexities surrounding language aesthetics in African literature. The relationship between language and literature is so central in African writing that such a discussion must be included in a dissertation which focuses, above all, on the interplay between language and literature. As a way of introducing the complexity of “the language issue” in colonial Africa, let me begin by briefly discussing both the context and the politics that ground this debate.

During colonization, missionaries and colonial administrators controlled publishing houses and the educational content of all publications, including novels. This meant that only texts with sufficiently authorized Christian messages or carefully selected euro-centric stories were propagated. In addition, British colonizers controlled their

³ An early version of this chapter, “‘He does not understand our customs’: Narrating Orality and Empire in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,” has been published in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46.1 (2010).

African colonies by forcing the natives to speak English; eventually a binary was established between English (or French, Belgian, German, and so on) and native language—the former being billed as superior to the latter in almost every conceivable way (for one thing, one was written while the other remained oral). This is a process recognized by Frantz Fanon in his seminal work *Wretched of the Earth*, wherein Fanon writes of the ways that colonial mechanisms used language to separate children from their own history, because their own heritage was shared only at home and it oftentimes relied on orally transmitted messages. At school, children were taught solely in the language of the colonizer and were indoctrinated regarding the superiority of the European tongue. As Fanon shows, the results of removing native language from education were devastating: colonized children eventually became separated from their own histories, and this, in turn, put the lives of colonized peoples more firmly in the control of the colonial regime.

Even today, some fifty years after Nigeria⁴ gained independence from British rule, it is difficult to get beyond the devastating history of language use and domination in Africa. Thus, two opposing general perspectives continue to circulate around the issue: the first presumes the need to reinstate precolonial African culture, society, and language; theorists working in this vein insist that colonial language continues to be a means of oppression—and therefore, as Fanon claims, a source of dehumanization. There are those who claim European language as a useful tool of colonial resistance—something legitimate and appropriate, something capable of subverting and resisting

⁴ I use Nigeria as the example here, as scholars tend to recognize 1960 (the year of Nigeria's independence) as the year in which language issues in African literature became a significant field of scholarly discourse.

colonial domination. For such theorists, in the words of Kwaku Asante-Darko, “postcolonial reality is not a physical mixture but a chemical compound which cannot be separated into its initial constituents,” and as such, all public practices of foreign language use must be discontinued (4). The goal, then, is “neither the traditional African nor the Black European, but the modern African” expressed in a global, hybridized tongue (“Ntu Editorial” qtd. in Asante-Darko 4).

In their work, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin explore the dichotomy between these opposing perspectives in order to outline precisely how postcolonial writers approach—and thereby engage with—dominant, colonial languages. Ashcroft et al. put name to the two varying approaches described above. The terms they give the two processes through which writers in the postcolonial world respond to both British English and local variants of indigenous language are “abrogation” and “accommodation”:

Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words (37).

Appropriation is the process by which the language is made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience [...]. Language is adopted as a tool and utilized to express widely differing cultural experiences (38).

Different logics underlie these two philosophies,⁵ but as Ashcroft et al. make clear, the most common point of differentiation has to do with the rejection of Western

⁵ It seems to me that, on some level, the influential constructs of abrogationist and assimilationist are not as divisive as they initially appear. Both schools of thought insist that African works be imbued with traditional themes, symbols, linguistic expressions taken from African languages, and local imagery. Each group is very much aware of the link between ethnic language and the history of an ethnic group; both show an intense consciousness regarding the need to preserve African cultures and customs; and, we must

civilization—including its language—and whether such a stance is politically or aesthetically necessary in the literature of postcolonial societies.⁶

If we follow the tenets of Ashcroft's schematic, we could categorize Fanon as one theorist who generally adheres to an abrogationist ideology. I say this because he uses his work *Black Skin White Masks* to interrogate the impact of colonization on the black psyche, to note the ways that colonial language subjugates colonized peoples, and to speak of the redemptive qualities of precolonial cultures and languages (*BSWM* 2). As previously mentioned, Fanon maintains that the worst assault on a people's consciousness is linguistic colonization, and he notes that the issue of language is of paramount importance to colonial studies because speaking a colonizer's language means existing absolutely for the colonizer:

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but also to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization [...]. Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above the jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards (*BSWM* 17-18).

Fanon's position in the above statement is complete denunciation of the colonizer's language (though in *Wretched of the Earth*, he also critiques the regressiveness of the nativist movement). Isaiah Ilo explains the reasoning behind this position and its relationship to concerns over language and identity more generally:

remember that, while Ngũgĩ's attempt to write only in his native Kikuyu was a laudable political action, he was subsequently forced to translate his work into English in order to reach a wider—global—audience.

⁶ The larger version of this question is, of course, the longstanding debate within postcolonial studies about postcolonial culture (as articulated by Abdul Jan Mohamed and Homi Bhabha, for example).

[According to Fanon], a person who has taken up the language of the colonizer has accepted the world of the colonizer and therefore the standards of the colonizer. This view of language [...] implies that particular languages embody distinctive ways of experiencing the world, of defining what we are. That is, we not only speak in particular languages, but, more fundamentally become the person we become because of the particular language community in which we grew up [...]. Language, above all else, shapes our distinctive ways of being in the world. Language, then, is the carrier of a people's identity, the vehicle of a certain way of seeing things, experiencing and feeling, determinant of particular outlooks on life (2).

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o agrees with Fanon's position in this regard, and he uses his collection of essays, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, to maintain that colonization was more than a process of physical force—instead, he notes, “the bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation” (9). Here Ngũgĩ is speaking of his own experiences of growing up in colonial Kenya, where British colonizers propagated English as the language of education leading, in turn, to what Ngũgĩ perceives as the death of orality in Kenyan indigenous languages. Ngũgĩ claims that these English-language practices were devastating to African literature, because “language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world” (16). In this statement, Ngũgĩ is very direct in claiming most African literature as oral, and thus he questions how the African experience can be expressed properly in another (written) language. Ultimately he claims that writing in African languages (after his 1982 novel, *Devil on the Cross*, Ngũgĩ has written all of his works in Gikuyu, his native language) is a necessary step toward

cultural identity and complete independence from centuries of European exploitation. Ilo provides a succinct summary of Ngũgĩ's position:

For Ngũgĩ [...], Africa is in need of healing from the longstanding injuries that colonialism has wrought on the indigenous languages and cultures, and this healing can only come through cultural autonomy and self-determination. So writing in African languages is a crucial step toward cultural identity and independence from continuing neo-colonial exploitation. But writing in African languages alone will not bring about the renaissance if that literature does not communicate the message of revolutionary unity and hope and embody the content of the people's anti-imperialist struggles for socio-political and economic liberation (3).

Nevertheless, there remains a large body of African writers who hail the linguistic, thematic, and aesthetic hybridism that comes through the marriage of European language and African literary forms. These writers eschew Ngũgĩ's stance on abrogation in favor of what Ashcroft calls "appropriation"—"a process by which language is made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience, or, as Raja Rao puts it, to 'convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own'" (Ashcroft, *Empire* 38).

We are all, by now, aware of the common theoretical claim that Chinua Achebe is Africa's most prolific appropriationist⁷; indeed, his brilliant career in English-language writing and his unabashed aesthetic regarding the importance of the English language seem to adhere to Ashcroft's very definition of the term. Achebe, however, is not alone in his defense of English. The hegemonic status of European languages is endorsed by

⁷ See for instance, Bernth Lindfors' introduction to *Conversations with Chinua Achebe*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977). For Lindfors, Achebe "is Africa's most important novelist": "He often has been called the inventor of the African novel, and though he modestly denies the title, it is true that modern African literature would not have flowered so rapidly and spectacularly had he not led the way by telling Africa's story from a distinctively African point of view" (x).

numerous African writers, critics, and politicians who consider their use of English, official or otherwise, as an inevitable and necessary pathway leading to the modernization of the continent and its urgent integration into the contemporary/globalized world. In his “The African Writer and the English Language,” Achebe argues that although English was imposed by colonialism, Africans can now view it as an asset in that it helped to foster continental and national unity. What’s more, it offers Africans the opportunity to speak of their experience in a world language. Achebe claims, however, that Africans do not need to use the language like a native speaker: “The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English, which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience” (“African Writer” 55). The point here is that the African writer must adapt the English language to the native experience, thereby establishing a “new” language that can both “carry the weight” of the African experience” (and, therefore, still be in “full communion with its ancestral home”) while also speaking to and engaging with a global, mainly Western, audience.

Responding in part to Achebe’s prolific writings on the subject, postcolonial scholarship today is rampant with scholars discussing the ways that Achebe’s writings, like all good appropriationist writings, blend indigenous and Western discourses in an attempt to produce an Other code—a code that is hybrid in nature and is neither completely detached from its African nor its European sources. Paul Bandia speaks of this *code métisse* in the following terms:

The primary aim of this in-between code is to reterritorialize the author and his/her audience, that is, to abolish the linguistic and cultural distance imposed by the foreign language between the writer and his audience (often a multicultural audience). [...]. It is the locus of the **co-existence** of languages in an equal relationship free of hierarchy (6; emphasis in original).

The hybridized nature of Achebe's work has been repeatedly posed, of course, but it seems to me that it is still far from being answered in a satisfactory way. Thus, my concern here is with Chinua Achebe's key work *Things Fall Apart* and the ways in which this novel's narrative strategy, indeed, does not actually adhere to the concise definition of assimilation Bandia offers above. Instead, I will argue that throughout *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses a narrative version of what linguist Thomas Klein calls "linguistic privacy" in order to guard native Igbo language from dilution, and, in essence, to dismantle the co-existence of colonial and indigenous language. He does this, I show, by removing traditional Igbo speech patterns from the text once the white man enters the scene in the second and third parts of the novel. Essentially this linguistic practice allows Achebe to do very much what abrogationists, like Fanon and Ngũgĩ, are professing: indeed, he preserves—and speaks to the necessity of sanctifying—Igbo as an African indigenous language. Unlike Ngũgĩ, however, he goes about this practice by paradoxically writing in the language of the colonizer. With this context in mind, this chapter will thus show that, despite the growing body of theoretical writings on the subject, it may be inappropriate, misleading, and oversimplified to continue to label Chinua Achebe as Africa's token appropriationist.

Language and Identity

Clearly neither identity nor language use is a fixed notion—nor is there a singular, agreed-upon perspective when it comes to theorizing on the subject of group identity construction in multilingual contexts. Two dominant ideologies tend to govern the debate concerning linguistic identity formation. Certain scholars, among them Carol Eastman, Thomas Reese, and Karmela Liebkind, question the link between language, identity, and culture, noting, after all, that a person may identify herself as Irish yet not speak Gaelic; or, an ethnic group may have a symbolic attachment to an associated language, but may *use* another more utilitarian language as its everyday vernacular. What is more, “second language adult learners do not necessarily need to identify with the cultural background of the language to speak it” (Anchimbe, “Multilingualism” 12). Sociologist Erving Goffman, in contrast, argues that the self is constructed through an accumulation of all languages, thus making our language choices of paramount importance to our identity construction. Linguist Eric Anchimbe aligns himself with Goffman and other scholars camped on this side of the linguistic-identity debate—those who maintain that “identity is incomplete if it is not communicated in a given language” (“Multilingualism” 12). Sociolinguist Andrée Tabouret-Keller puts it this way: “[t]he language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language is inseparable” (qtd. in Klein 310). Nevertheless, within positions and attitudes toward the colonizer’s language, we have the abrogationists and appropriationist modes discussed above.

Thomas B. Klein—in his very useful study, *Linguistic Identity, Agency, and Consciousness in Creole*—examines the dynamics of identity construction to determine precisely what “markers of belonging” exist when one aligns oneself with a specific linguistic community (312).

Klein notes that in simply speaking one’s native language, a sense of group identity is solidified in that “when one is born and raised locally, one typically speaks the local language” (310). He identifies speech—and perhaps more specifically speech patterns—as an important element of group identity formation, although he mainly concerns his study with historical processes and the ways that certain societies “are forced to negotiate the aftermath of slavery or the colonial era in constructing their identities” (311). To this end, Klein uses linguistic field research to show precisely how postcolonial populations use their own subject agency to respond to the imposition of a colonial tongue. Klein shows that these populations are very much aware of all that is “diminished or lost” when native tongues are replaced by the language of the colonizer,⁸

⁸ In her article, “Linguistic and Ethnographic Fieldwork,” linguist Nancy Dorian offers a very concise description of all that is “diminished or lost” when native tongues are replaced by the language of the colonizer (32). Writing about a hypothetical group of people still occupying their traditional land, Klein remarks on the language characteristics a linguistic fieldworker might encounter:

[G]eographical features will have indigenous-language names that reflect the group’s profound connection to the region: Places where important events took place have names that reflect those events, and places with mythological or supernatural associations also have names rich in meaning for the group. The plants and animals of the native region, too, may have indigenous names that suggest their local use [...]. Traditional stories that relate high points in the group’s history usually abound, and traditional tales that convey spiritual beliefs and mythological lore will probably be even more plentiful. These stories, so fundamental to a people’s sense of themselves, will be unavoidably stripped of a good deal of their original character if the language in which they were originally told is replaced by a different language. Other sorts of material with major cultural significance face the same stripping process [...]. In fact, loss of resonance, tone, and some degree of inferential meaning will affect every verbal art form that depends for part of its beauty, significance, and uniqueness on properties specific to the language in question, such as syllabic structure, rhythmic patterns, sentence melodies, and repetitions of certain sounds

and thus, he analyzes the privacy issues and the code-switching efforts that take place in such politicized and polarized environments (32). As a result of the subject response in Klein's study, he is able to conclude that: "Dialects and minority languages survive and thrive in the face of colonial language because they function as markers of belonging, and express a sense of solidarity within the speech community" (315). Klein's words here certainly offer a telling observation: that while dominant, colonial languages may be present in postcolonial societies—and used for official purposes in, say, government or education—minority languages continue to foster a sense of belonging in the community and presumably a sense of resistance (or at least conscious group distinctions, as the abrogationist philosophy would have us believe), and this results in a kinship that is not locatable in the utterances of an imposed tongue.

Such "solidarity," Klein argues, results from the fact that languages are crafted by their speakers to hide intended messages or to build up group boundaries, which is why it is hardly uncommon for academic researchers to notice "a marked reluctance, if not outright refusal, by members of [colonized] populations to share their language in field research projects" (315, 319). This refusal appears to be an attempt, on the part of the colonized, to harbor and preserve the behavioral patterns unique to their own community.

As Nancy Dorian writes:

Because of their weak position in the social and linguistic hierarchy,

or sound sequences, not to mention nuances deeply embedded in the grammar of the indigenous language but not easily expressible in other languages. Core spiritual concepts framed in the heritage language of the group can be difficult or impossible to express with equal clarity or depth of meaning in another tongue. Much of this clarity or depth is inescapably diminished or lost when a people replaces its ancestral language with another (32).

it is very likely that they [the colonized] have been taken advantage of in the past, politically or economically or both. The more subjugation they have experienced, the more determined they may be to keep to themselves what is left of their own culture, including their language (qtd. in Klein 319).

A statement such as this brings to mind a scene from Buchi Emecheta's novel *The Joys of Motherhood*, wherein Nwakusor, an Igbo man trying to survive in colonial Lagos, ruminates on the privilege of being alive despite the trying circumstances of extreme poverty, colonial rule, and the loss of his Igbo cultural heritage. The narrator tells readers that "he [Nwakusor] was like someone who had a valuable gift and who for a long time had not appreciated its value: it was only when the gift was about to be taken away from him that he realized what he had been taking for granted" (59). Indeed, Dorian's research agrees with the sentiment of this scene: that colonized peoples begin to appreciate and cultivate what they see as inherent or unchanging aspects of their group identity when faced with what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls the "cultural bomb" of colonialism, which, in his words, is intent on "annihilat[ing] a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (3). Chinua Achebe, I argue, uses his seminal work *Things Fall Apart* at once to cultivate a very strong Igbo linguistic identity while also safeguarding the Igbo's traditional language codes and patterns against the threat of European language and colonial annihilation.

Narrative Strategy

"We cannot leave the matter in his [the white man's] hands because he does not understand our customs, just as we do not understand his. We say he is foolish because

he does not know our ways [...]” (*Things Fall Apart* 191). With these words, Okeke, the Igbo native who translates for the English in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), articulates for his fellow natives the way in which Chinua Achebe’s narrative technique manifests the colonized subject’s anxieties. Achebe composes his work in the language of the colonizer, but integrates folklore, proverbs, tribal customs, and the performance of oral storytelling in order to evoke Igbo tradition and to force the reader to acknowledge the story he tells on his own terms. Many have argued here that by infusing the text with traditional Igbo words and phrases (“obi,” “egwugwu,” “iyi-uwa,” etc.), Achebe’s work, much like the hybrid border language of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, is an assimilationist text in that it reshapes and recontextualizes the language of the colonizer—and the implicit power structures within it—in a specifically hybridized form of English.

For decades, critics have discussed *Things Fall Apart* in terms of its rhetorical strategy, noting the way in which Achebe integrates the literary elements of both African and European narration in *Things Fall Apart*. However, the novel’s reflection upon the relationship between original language and “new” language, its exploration of narrative in relation to print/oral cultures and nonliterate/literate societies, and its abrogationist-like ideologies concerning the need to preserve the indigenous Igbo tongue remain virtually unexplored. By bringing such issues to the foreground, scholars will be capable of reading *Things Fall Apart* as a work that successfully connects history and culture to original language, particularly oral language, in a way that grants a measure of power for the otherwise powerless colonial subject.

To contextualize my position, let me begin with a succinct summary of the critical discourse surrounding narrative and linguistic strategy in Achebe's text. William Ferris notes that critics such as B. Matip are quick to characterize *Things Fall Apart* as a work in which Achebe attempts to return "Africa" to its indigenous peoples, as the novel tragically illustrates an African past dislocated by colonizing white missionaries. In this vein, Ferris surmises, somewhat problematically, that readers must judge all African literature in terms of the struggle for colonial independence. He notes: "Writing in the wake of colonialism and its cultural de-Africanization, the role of the African writer is twofold. He must describe the full horror of colonialism and its threat to the progress of humanity, and he must help resurrect the cultural traditions of his people" (27). Certainly this sweeping statement seems to overlook the fact that much African literature shows no influence of—and often has little to do with—colonialism and the struggle for independence; as such, it seems obvious that all African works cannot be judged solely in the terms that Ferris purports.

Furthermore, while it is obvious that *Things Fall Apart* conveys "the full horror of colonialism," I am not comfortable asserting that Achebe's text aims to reinscribe the cultural traditions of the Igbo people (Ferris 27). I say this because the text never allows for a space in which Igbo traditions, particularly oral traditions, are replaced by the conquering hands of the white man. Rather, Achebe uses the language of the work to preserve Igbo culture. This is masterfully done through the repetition of particular phrases in the oral sphere that bring to mind the cultural customs of the Igbo.

Certainly critics are correct in paying strict attention to the systems of language Achebe employs to depict the text's non-English cultural community; the novel, after all, proves rife with the tension between the language of the colonizer and the colonized. Or, to paraphrase the work of Abdul JanMohamed in his essay "Sophisticated Primitivism," at the formal level, *Things Fall Apart* is, in fact, a syncretic combination of traditional oral narrative structures and the structures of Western "novels." Given such critical attention, it is hardly surprising that much has been written concerning the novel's narrative strategies and attention to proverbial expressions. Bernth Lindfors, for example, argues that the proverbs "[s]erve as keys to an understanding of [Achebe's] novels because he uses them [...] to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, and to focus on the values of the society he is portraying" (3). B. Eugene McCarthy's apt analysis, on the other hand, properly characterizes the rhythmical structure in *Things Fall Apart*, commenting that "the patterning and repetition in Achebe's novel are characteristics of the self-conscious artistry of oral narrative performance, where plot moves by repetition and predictability" (245). In his analysis, McCarthy successfully breaks the code of Achebe's supposedly "simple mode of narration and equally simple prose style" by carefully analyzing the repetitive structures in the narrator's words and expressions (243).

Also quite appropriate to the discussion of linguistic and narrative strategy in *Things Fall Apart* is Leonard Doob's book, *Communication in Africa*, which examines traditional African folklore and conversational expressions, claiming that neither is affected as a society transforms from an oral to a print culture. Rather, Doob suggests

that folklore serves to add a new dimension of communication to an already hybrid society. While I concur with the latter part of Doob's claim, my own contention joins the ranks of scholars, such as Austin Shelton, who study traditional African literature as a means of interpreting the effects of cultural contact on the colonized country. In this way, I read Achebe's text as a work that repeatedly hints at modern African society as one now disrupted and transformed by contact with the European colonizer.

While I concede the usefulness of these linguistic and critical interpretations, and while scholars have correctly identified a variety of narrative strategies within *Things Fall Apart*, their analyses fail to account for two fundamental principles: namely, the myriad phrases that are repeated throughout the first part of the work; and the formative shift, the poetic volta, that takes place between parts one and two of the novel (indeed, more than half way through the novel), as the colonizing white men attempt to transform Igbo culture from a nonliterate to a literate society. What will become increasingly evident is that while literary scholars continue to read *Things Fall Apart* as a primary postcolonial text, Achebe's reliance on oral narrative strategies may not be as easy to categorize as previously thought.

This point becomes particularly important when read in conjunction with Achebe's 1974 essay, "Chi in Igbo Cosmology." In this text, Achebe comments on the language of his people, noting that "Since Igbo people did not construct a rigid and closely argued system of thought to explain the universe and the place of man in it, preferring the metaphor of myth and poetry, anyone seeking an insight into their world *must seek it along their own way*. Some of these ways are folk tales [and] proverbs [...]"

(161; emphasis added). It is important to discern from Achebe's account that, prior to colonization, the Igbo's linguistic and communication strategies existed primarily in the realm of the spoken. And, to represent the oral aspects of precolonial Igbo culture on the printed page, Achebe imbeds in his novel—and continually repeats—certain phrases, folk tales, and proverbs. He does this primarily because oral customs lack the materiality of the printed page. Which is to say, the uttered phrase becomes inextricable from the moment of its expression—a moment, according to Jonathan Greenberg, that “implies a physically present [speaker] and audience, a specific community situated in space and time” (5). And it is this exact oral community that Achebe seeks to preserve for the Igbo people. Indeed, as I will show, he does this by removing Igbo speech customs from the novel as soon as the narration begins to trace the inexorable advance of the colonizing Europeans in the second and third parts of the novel.

Central to this discussion of speech patterns and repetition is Deborah Tannen's study in linguistics, *Talking Voices*, which examines the role of repetition in speech and public discourses. Tannen notes several criteria used to identify repetition, including “a scale of fixity in form,” in which repetitions may range “from exact repetition (the same words uttered in the same rhythmic pattern) to paraphrase (similar ideas in different words)” (54). Wilfred Cartey's analysis of *Things Fall Apart* discusses this latter category of paraphrase, which he refers to as “inner imagery,” in passages such as: “When the rain finally came, it was in large, solid drops of frozen water which the people called ‘the nuts of the water of heaven’” (*Things Fall Apart* 97, 92). Similarly, Nwoye believes Christianity to be “like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the

panting earth” (104). Unlike Cartey’s analysis, in which similar phrases are used to describe fundamentally different aspects of the novel or unrelated scenes, my own reading will focus on instances of nearly exact repetition used, oftentimes, in quick succession to describe the same scene, event, or character.

Tannen also elaborates on the role repetition has on its “listenership” (59). She notes that, in some instances, “Each time the utterance is repeated, the theme of the story [...] is developed, slightly changed in meaning as well as form” (59). It is this idea that B. Eugene McCarthy takes up in relation to *Things Fall Apart*, arguing that “once a name or event is introduced [Achebe] proceeds by moving forward, then reaching back to repeat and expand, moving onward again, accumulating detail and elaborating” (245). To illustrate this point, McCarthy provides a close reading of the novel’s opening paragraph to substantiate such “backlooping,” to borrow Walter Ong’s term (qtd. in McCarthy 245). The text reads:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights (3).

According to McCarthy’s interpretation, this paragraph’s oral expression becomes evident “when Achebe’s narrator repeats a phrase, for example, ‘Amalinze the Cat,’ then carries it forward with new information” (245). Thus, “‘well known’ advances to ‘fame’ and to ‘honour,’ just as ‘It was this man that Okonkwo threw’ repeats what has gone before and underlines its importance” (245). While I do not disagree with McCarthy’s

analysis, my own reading aligns with Tannen's assertion that, in other instances, "No information is added, and no perceptible contribution is made to the development of a story, theme, or idea" (59). Instead, I maintain that the repetitive phrases serve largely to highlight the difference between the spoken and the printed sphere, the African oral rather than the English "literary" tradition.

Locating some of these ideas in Achebe's text, I will now focus my attention on the function of orality within *Things Fall Apart*, placing particular emphasis on the novel's first section, in which Achebe's narrator introduces readers to Igbo culture through a variety of episodes wherein Okonkwo, the central character, governs his household through his dominant position as family patriarch. As the third-person narrator conveys the story of Okonkwo's life, idioms, proverbs, and, above all, strict repetition, are evoked to transport the story into the oral sphere. Most notably, the novel's first instance of repetitive phrasing occurs when Ogbuefi Ezeugo, the clan's most "powerful orator" (*Things Fall Apart* 10), demonstrates the performative nature of the Igbo's spoken culture. Seeking recompense for one of the Umuofia's murdered daughters, Ogbuefi attempts to rally the tribe by bellowing the chant, "Umuofia kwenu" four times over (10). On each occasion, a resounding "Yaa!" from the crowd of "ten thousand men" meets the bellicose request (10). A few lines later, we are told that Ogbuefi bellowed "Umuofia kwenu" a fifth time "and the crowd yelled in answer" (11).

As the novel progresses, Achebe employs this strict repetition to characterize Okonkwo's wives and children. Speaking of Ikemefuna, Okonkwo's hostage-turned-son, the narrator tells readers that: "They [the clansmen] seemed to forget all about him as

soon as they had taken the decision” that he should live with Okonkwo (27). This same sentiment is echoed three chapters later when the narrator remarks: “[T]he elders of Umuofia seemed to have forgotten about him” (52). It is not until the clansmen are about to slay Ikemefuna that a repetitive statement is employed to discuss him for a second time. In an attempt to characterize the somber atmosphere that precedes the boy’s death, Achebe’s narrator declares: “A deathly silence descended on Okonkwo’s compound” (58). Lines later, as the clansmen travel to carry out the death sentence, we are told that “all was silent” and that “silence fell upon” the clansmen as they approached the appointed place of execution (58). Moreover, as they continue their journey, “they argued for a short while and fell into silence again” (59). The trinity of repetition used to explain Ikemefuna’s character is finally complete as the clansmen arrive at the scene of the slaughter. Ogbuefi Ezeudu, speaking to the grieving Okonkwo, remarks: “The boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death.” Five lines later, Ogbuefi then declares the same proclamation: “I want you to have nothing to do with [the death]. He calls you his father” (57). It is not until Okonkwo recalls the chilling murder in Chapter Thirteen that the remark appears for a third time: “A cold shiver ran down Okonkwo’s back as he remembered the last time the old man had visited him. ‘ That boy calls you father,’ he had said. ‘Bear no hand in his death’”⁹ (121).

Much like Ikemefuna, Okonkwo’s second wife, Ekwefi, and their fragile daughter, Ezinma, are also characterized through repetitive phrases. While repetitive

⁹ In Achebe’s novel, *No Longer At Ease*, which follows the life of Okonkwo’s grandson, Obi, the sentiment of this passage is also repeated. The narrator, providing a summation of Ikemefuna’s death, remarks: “But one day the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves decreed that the boy should be killed. Obi’s grandfather [Okonkwo] loved the boy. But when the moment came it was his machete that cut him down. Even in those days some elders said it was a great wrong that a man should raise his hands against a child that called him father” (158).

phrasing is only employed once for Ekwefi—Okonkwo “was too poor to pay her bride-price,” and again, “She had married Anene because Okonkwo was too poor then to marry”—the child Ezinma is rarely mentioned without a repetitive phrase (40, 109). More than any other character, seven phrases are repeated throughout the four chapters (Chapters Five through Nine) that chart the development of Ezinma’s character.

As the reader is first introduced to Ezinma, the narrator quips: “Ezinma, unlike most children, called her mother [Ekwefi] by her name” (40). It is only when the family is preparing for the child’s assumed death that the phrase repeats itself: “[Ezinma] called her [mother] by her name, Ekwefi, as her father and other grownup people did” (76). When Okonkwo enters Ekwefi’s hut and prepares to dine on the meal prepared by Ekwefi and Ezinma, he chides the child to: “Sit like a woman! [...] Ezinma brought her two legs together and stretched them in front of her” (44). Following the death of Ikemefuna, the child, anxious for her father to eat, sits down before Okonkwo “and stretched her legs in front of her” like a woman (63). Watching the daughter whom he is “specially fond of” attending to the duties of the home, Okonkwo follows both demands that Ezinma “sit like a woman” with the rebuke: “She should have been a boy,” “She should have been a boy,” “If Ezinma had been a boy [...]” (64, 66). Even Okonkwo’s eventual exile is not enough to dislodge his longing for another son. While gathering his remaining children together to rebuke the Christian conversion, “the great abomination,” of their elder brother, Nwoye, the narrator comments: “He [Okonkwo] never stopped regretting that Ezinma was a girl” (172). Afterward, Okonkwo himself observes for the final time, “I wish she were a boy” (173).

Quite markedly, Ekwefi's desperate hope that the child not follow her nine siblings to the grave is, like her husband's declaration, also repeated three times. When Chielo asks how the child is growing, Ekwefi replies: "Perhaps she has come to stay [...] I think she will stay" (48). Following her illness, the narrator tells readers in Chapter Nine, "She had lived so long that perhaps she had decided to stay" (80). Further, it is during the time of Ezinma's illness that the concerned Ekwefi "knelt beside the sick child, occasionally feeling with her palm the wet, burning forehead" (76). And later in the scene, "As she knelt by [Ezinma], feeling with her palm the wet, burning forehead, she prayed a thousand times" (85). Here, clearly, we see repetition dispersed throughout the account of the child's illness; and Achebe continues to make use of repetitive phrasing when the "famous" clansman Okagbue, attempting to save the child's life and dispel her "evil" by locating her "iyi-uwa," asks three times in three pages: "Where did you bury your iyi-uwa?" (80, 82). In quick succession, the child responds to the final inquiry with the twice-repeated phrase: "It is here" (82).

Given the plethora of repetitive phrases throughout Part One of the novel, it is notable that a framing device, a repetition in form, opens and closes the first section. Just as Ogbuefi Ezeugo demonstrates the performative nature of the Igbo's spoken culture in the novel's opening chant, the section closes with a chant from the masked egwugwu, Evil Forest, in a communal hearing meant to determine the fate of the wife-beating Uzowulu. Addressing the crowd, Evil Forest proceeds as follows:

"Our father, my hand has touched the ground,' he said.
'Uzowulu's body, do you know me?' asked the spirit.

‘How can I know you, father? You are beyond our knowledge’¹⁰ (90).

After both sides have pleaded their case, Evil Forest again speaks to the crowd:

“‘Uzowulu’s body, I salute you,’ he said.
 ‘Our father, my hand has touched the ground,’ replied Uzowulu, touching
 the earth.
 ‘Uzowulu’s body, do you know me?’
 ‘How can I know you, father? You are beyond our knowledge,’ Uzowulu
 replied” (93).

In a final act of repetition, Achebe exemplifies the necessarily repetitive nature of speech, as the above-mentioned exchange is consolidated in the closing lines of Chapter Ten.

The guilty Okukwe addresses Odukwe:

“‘Odukwe’s body, I greet you,’ he said.
 ‘My hand is on the ground,’ replied Okukwe.
 ‘Do you know me?’
 ‘No man can know you,” replied Odukwe” (93).

So what conclusions can we draw from all of this repetition? What becomes evident through the infusion of repetition in the Igbo people’s speech patterns is that repetition clearly characterizes precolonial Igbo life and its people in a manner that closely resembles African oral traditions, such as folklore, myth, and proverb. It is thus rather telling and significant that once the colonizing white man enters the novel in Parts Two and Three, the narrative dramatically abandons this very play with repetition in the oral sphere. In other words, Igbo oral techniques and culture are largely removed from the narrative’s focus on the Igbo.

¹⁰ Again, Achebe’s novel, *No Longer at Ease*, elaborates on the significance of this passage. In a scene between Obi Okonkwo and his Christian father, the young Obi proposes that his family “start negotiations” with the family of the girl he intends to marry (150). When his father learns that the girl, Clara, is an *osu*—a member of a tribe whose union will “bring the mark of shame and of leprosy” to the village of Umuofia—the narrator provides the following summation of the account: “[Obi’s] father laughed. It was the kind of laughter one sometimes heard from a masked ancestral spirit. He would salute you by name and ask you if you knew who he was. You would reply with one hand humbly touching the ground that you did not, that he was beyond human knowledge. Then he might laugh as if through a throat of metal. And the meaning of that laughter was clear: “I did not really think you would know, you miserable human worm!” (150).

In his analysis of Achebe and Walter Benjamin, Jonathan Greenberg identifies this moment as also involving a narrative shift in which “the novel itself gives us reason to assert that its own story is the story of *the very moment of transition from story to novel*” (22; emphasis in original). I would extend Greenberg’s point back to Benjamin by maintaining that the transition is a moment in which the novel gives us reason to assert that its own story is the story of the very moment of transition from *oral* to *written*. The point, according to Greenberg, “is not simply that [the work] is about the arrival of forces of modernization in the form of British missionaries, but that it narrates the emergence” of a print culture (22). As the novel concludes, “Achebe shows the beginning of the end of the Igbo culture by showing the deterioration of the Igbo narrative system, and the ways in which their beliefs in the meanings of events are tested and changed” (22). Greenberg astutely identifies a series of events in Part Three of the novel that test whether the Igbo gods will protect their people as they move from a traditional way of life toward modernity. These telling moments include Okoli’s killing of a sacred python and Enoch’s unmasking of an ancestral spirit. Greenberg continues:

At times, such as the sudden death of Okoli, the gods do seem to take action, and faith in them is temporarily restored, but at other times they do not, such as when they fail to kill the African Christian Mr. Kiaga when he takes in twin children who had been left to die. Less and less frequently do beginnings (warnings, omens, prohibitions) lead to the expected endings (revenge, punishment). What results is a glimpse of a world in which *an overall narrative coherence is obliterated* (23; emphasis in original).

While my own reading certainly agrees with the assertion that “overall narrative coherence is obliterated” in Part Three of the novel, it seems to me that this transition has less to do with the loss of shared wisdom and experience, as Greenberg suggests, and

more to do with the dramatic shift from spoken to written cultures. In this way, the text seems to also reflect narratologically the shift between precolonial Igbo culture and the presence of white domination and English language starting half way through the novel; which is to say, it is possible to read the lack of repetition in Parts Two and Three as reflective of colonial domination, which, according to my interpretation, essentially necessitates the linguistic protective mechanisms discussed herein.

Indeed, as the white man begins to dominate throughout the final two-thirds of Achebe's novel, we see the repetitive phrases fall away as English begins to take over. Okonkwo's necessary exile and the loss of his tribal heritage dictate the novel's final sections, wherein British missionaries colonize the village of Umuofia, and the banished Okonkwo becomes dismayed with the news of Nwoye's Christian conversion and the realization that his own village is succumbing to the ways of the white man:

He [Okonkwo] knew that he had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan (171).

And yet, Okonkwo's dismay is quickly overcome by a firm resolve to regain his tribal position upon his return to the land of his ancestors: "He was determined that his return should be marked by his people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the seven wasted years."

In the final paragraphs of Part Two, Achebe again briefly employs repetitive phrasing as a way to underscore the focus on Okonkwo's desolation and determination and to signal Okonkwo's return to the old ways of the tribe. Anxious to preserve his

family's heritage in the face of the colonizing missionaries, Okonkwo states: "I have only called you together because it is good for kinsmen to meet" (*Things Fall Apart* 166).

This same sentiment is repeated by one of the oldest members of the extended family, the "umunna," in the final lines of Part Two, "We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so" (167). The section's play between narrative repetition and personal demise can thus be read as one individual's response to the complex challenge of contact with a colonizing cultural force "self-righteously bent upon a 'civilizing' mission," as Bu-Buakei Jabbi puts it (201). Tragically, Okonkwo's utter refusal to accept both the white man's religion and his way of life, is played out in the novel's final repetitive phrase. The only instance of repetition in Part Three is found one line apart. Answering the white man's question, "Which among you is called Okonkwo?" Obierika twice replies: "He is not here" (207). He then takes the white man to the tree from which Okonkwo's body hangs.

In this simple response, which serves as its own act of repetition in that it mirrors Ezinma's timid claim, "It is here," when questioned about the burial of her *iyi-uwa*, Achebe suggests that though the conquering hands of the white man may have infiltrated Igbo society, the speech patterns of the Igbo remain preserved, as his narrator employs repetitive phrasing only once (as outlined above in the scene with the District Commissioner and Obierika) after the white man enters the scene. Such shielding speaks to the type of linguistic creativity Klein discusses in populations where agency has been "traditionally denied" (323). This is telling in that it allows readers to approach Achebe's narrative as one which performs a version of Klein's linguistic privacy, because, above

all, throughout the narrative we see a “protective mechanism” emerge that is “consciously employed” on the part of Achebe in order to fulfill a ‘boundary-marking function’ (Klein 320). Which is to say, Achebe reserves Igbo speech patterns only for Igbo culture and characters, and thus emerges as an abrogationists of sorts.

The success of this technique becomes apparent towards the novel’s end, when it becomes obvious that the white man has grossly failed to understand the culture and customs of the Igbo. For, as Achebe reminds readers, “Anyone seeking an insight into [the Igbo] world must seek it along their own way” (“Chi” 161). Clearly, the European colonizers of *Things Fall Apart* have neglected to engage with African culture, and it is this blatant disregard that leads to a failure so palpable that the only way the District Commissioner can make sense of African customs is not through an understanding of their oral culture, of which he has been denied access, but rather in terms of the European conflation between the print and public spheres. We thus see this played out in his desire to write a book with the condescending title *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

According to Greenberg, it is in the District Commissioner’s proposed plan that we can locate Achebe’s voice as he “clearly deprivilege[s]” and “implicitly mock[s]” the District Commissioner’s naïve perspective, as the latter thinks only of his own fame and monetary gain and neglects to look beyond his own blind spot and toward the customs of the Igbo (14). Immediately following the District Commissioner’s demand that the hanging corpse of Okonkwo be removed, the comfortable voice of Achebe’s narrator

gives way to the voice of the District Commissioner. Poignantly, the tragic tale of Okonkwo concludes with the words of the colonizer:

As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, one must be firm in cutting the details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* (208-209).

Greenberg gives the reader a summation of this scene: “The novel the reader has just completed, the story of Okonkwo’s life, will be reduced to a single paragraph in a book that aims to perpetuate the imperialist-missionary work whose horrific effects the reader has just witnessed” (24). Clearly the proposed work maintains the ability to relegate the once-powerful Okonkwo to a sensationalized African Other, and, as a consequence, functions as a colonial tool for the District Commissioner.

The importance of the Commissioner’s project cannot be dismissed; for, while it may be far too speculative to assume that the book, as an emblem of Benedict Anderson’s argument about “print-capitalism,” has the ability to endow the Igbo people with the imaginary belief that they exist in “a league of anonymous equals,” its very presence does speak to the introduction of writing among the primarily oral Igbo culture (Anderson 4, 133). According to Ismail Talib’s study, *The Language of Postcolonial Literatures*, this shift from an oral to a written culture is plagued with tension, as “not all communities consistently view” writing as a “linguistic advance” (73). Let me cite Achebe’s own words regarding the standardization of written Igbo by Christian missionaries:

Formal, standardized, written Igbo—like many other African languages—came into being as a result of the Christian missionaries’ desire to translate the Bible into indigenous tongues. Unfortunately, when the Christian Missionary Society tackled Igbo, they employed a curiously democratic process: they brought together six Igbo converts, each from a different location, each speaking a different dialect. Working their way through a particular biblical book or passage, each in turn would provide a translation.

As one might expect, the resulting compilation bore no resemblance to any of the six dialects. Yet this “Union Igbo,” as it was called, authorized by repeated editions of the Bible, became the official written form of the language, a strange hodge-podge with no linguistic elegance, natural rhythm or oral authenticity (Achebe, qtd. in Talib 74).

Here, in Achebe’s account, we see the colonizer introducing written language and committing violence to traditional dialects and their prospects of survival in order to necessitate a full Christian conversion and, by extension, further the colonial agenda.

Quoting from Ernest Emenyonu’s *The Rise of the Igbo Novel*, Talib recognizes the ways in which language is used as a tool of Empire-building when he speaks directly to the difficulties of incorporating written language in Achebe’s Africa. He writes: “the effect of ‘the long-standing controversy over an acceptable orthography,’ which ‘remains unsolved to this day’ had a comprehensive effect [...] on the Igbos and their literature in general, as they ‘have come to see and accept English [...] as the language of Igbo literature’” (75). Traditionally speaking, however, the very notion of writing an Igbo literature, or of having to translate “from a spoken to a written culture,” seems to rebut the long-held African view that “written literature violate[s] one of the most important literary tenets” of success (Talib 73). According to Mazisi Kunene’s research, in the African scene, in order to be considered successful, literature must be able to be

“disseminated [...] communally” (qtd. in Talib 73). In other words, it must maintain, as part of its literary essence, an oral quality that will allow for communal transmission.

In these terms, then, perhaps we can recognize in the Commissioner’s print project something that will further dismantle the Igbo’s sense of orality—and, by extension, their community. Or, perhaps *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* will actually call for the destruction of the Igbo before such a rupture can take place. Certainly this reading seems convincing if one considers that *Things Fall Apart* is often read as a postcolonial text that “writes back” against the center of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*; here, then, it is hard not to draw the parallel between the District Commissioner’s desire to write the aforementioned book and Kurtz’s obsessive drive to complete his report for the *International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs*. Kurtz’s report begins with the “argument that we whites [...] can exert a power for good practically unbounded” over the savages of the Congo but ends with a creed that speaks to the corrupting power of colonialism: “Exterminate all the brutes!” (50, 51).

As evidenced in the brutality of this statement, it becomes clear that what began as a religious quest to bring European greatness to the African Congo ends with a total abandonment of the civilizing mission. And Kurtz himself becomes nothing more than a symbol of this estrangement and hostility. In Africa, greed and corruption begin to conquer Kurtz, so much so that his death is eventually “haunted by shadowy images [...]—images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously around his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas—these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments” (67). For, if Mr.

Kurtz truly believes that the savages are all—by essential nature—barbaric, primitive, and unable to adhere to white European convention, the only way, indeed, to eliminate savageness is to exterminate them. It is thus appropriate to read Kurtz’s ruin as the result of confronting the hollowness within himself, and not, as Achebe argues, as a result of exposing “himself to the wild irresistible allure of the jungle” and having the “darkness [find] him out” (“An Image of Africa” 261). We are told, after all, that “all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” (*Heart of Darkness* 50).

Acknowledging the context of Achebe’s work, we might thus be tempted to speculate on the effect the colonizing mission will have on the District Commissioner. With enough time and exposure, perhaps the desire to bring European greatness to the Igbo people will, as with Kurtz, end up corrupted into the desire for material greed and predatory conquest. We might well wonder if the concluding sentiment of *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* will echo the sentiments behind the final cry of Mr. Kurtz’s report for the *International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs*. In Conrad’s depiction, “Exterminate the Brutes” is the only verdict the colonizer can render (*Heart of Darkness* 51). For, according to this corrupted ideology, the only way to truly rid the world of barbarism and primitivism—to, in the words of the District Commissioner, “bring civilization to [the] different parts of Africa”—is above all, to exterminate (208). In this vein, certainly Kurtz, and possibly also the District Commissioner, conform to the psychological case studies Aimé Césaire provides in his groundbreaking work *Discourse on Colonialism*. After decades of examining the psychological effects of colonial rule on both the colonizer and the colonized, Césaire

concludes: “[C]olonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism” (35; emphasis in original). Above all, “[C]olonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native [...] inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer [...] tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal” (41; emphasis in original). Spurred on by greed, and perhaps also by guilt, Kurtz’s final call for mass extermination speaks precisely to the animalistic tendencies Césaire shudders at encountering in those too-long exposed to the colonial venture.

Despite these two alternatives—either assimilation or annihilation—the District Commissioner’s refusal to look into the culture and customs of the Igbo people allows Achebe a way to preserve precolonial Igbo language, as repetition in the oral sphere is finite and lacks the restrictions of the printed page. In short, what is important is that Achebe does not offer readers “a finished life, a closed book, a completed narrative [as the District Commissioner’s book would undoubtedly do] [Rather,] the text’s orality remains open and self-perpetuating, gesturing beyond itself to an endless supply of shareable experience among the Igbo people” (Greenberg 10).

In this way, we can read *Things Fall Apart* as a highly formal experiment. As this discussion has shown, Achebe infuses this work with abrogationist ideologies concerning the necessity to preserve native Igbo language—and he does this, paradoxically, through brilliant rhetorical strategies that are celebrated by scholars as skillful appropriation. Which is to say, through a complex system of narrative and linguistic forms, Achebe

preserves Igbo speech culture by constructing what Wolfgang Iser calls a “fabricated reality” that thematizes, as part of the story, the “distance/difference between the ‘oral’ and the ‘written’” (134). Indeed, in this sense, Achebe eschews the appropriationist desire to blend indigenous and Western discourse into a cohesive project that is hybrid in nature, and we can therefore conclude that *Things Fall Apart* does not, as some critics claim, establish the co-existence of native and European language in an equal relationship free of hierarchy. Instead, Achebe separates Igbo oral culture from the contaminating presence of European written/print culture—narratologically and textually. In this way, Achebe is very much aware of the need to resist the colonial experience, and, thus, he uses *Things Fall Apart* to suggest the timelessness of orality—and the primacy of native language—amid the separate emergence of print, nation, even Empire.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE SHIFT IN FRIEL'S *TRANSLATIONS*:

THE "SELF IS PERCEIVED AS OTHERNESS"

The eminent linguist, Joshua Fishman, defines a linguistic shift as the “replacement of one language by another as the primary means of communication”; which is to say, a linguistic shift occurs when a community of speakers—all of whom share a native language—abandon that language and collectively transform to speaking another language in its place (qtd. in Lim 234). Lisa Lim and Umberto Ansaldo note that a linguistic shift is “usually associated with negative, social, political, and/or economic issues, such as the destruction of autonomous communities or the deprivation of traditional land, and this is usually accompanied by the call to reverse the shift and/or to document and maintain endangered language” (234). It is, above all, the rhetoric of “destruction” and “deprivation” that links any discussion of shifts in language with the broader context of language rights and, perhaps more specifically, linguistic human rights. In this way, scholars tend to examine shifts in language through the lenses of endangerment, preservation, and revitalization, asking two kinds of questions: (1) what effect does language shift have on the *language being shifted to* and the *language being shifted away from*? And, (2) is it possible to predict when a shift in language will take place?

This latter question is ultimately of great importance, for language shift can happen either quickly or gradually and, oftentimes, the effects of such a shift depend on the fluidity of the process and the nature of the change. Caribbean Creole languages, for instance, developed within a century from African and European languages, and most African slave populations lost their African languages within two generations due to slavery-imposed separations. The decline of Irish Gaelic, on the contrary, has been evident since the seventeenth century, although the language itself has never been fully eradicated (there still remains a substantial minority in the Western portion of Ireland who remain proud Gaelic speakers).

While it is difficult to determine fully all the factors that led to the shift away from the Irish language, most scholars agree that they are a combination of England's hostility toward Irish (and the subsequent forced imposition of English), the violent imposition of both English rule and English culture, and in certain segments of Irish culture (especially Anglo-Irish Protestants and in larger urban communities like Dublin and Cork) the accepted gradual shift from Irish to English (see, for example, Seán de Fréine's *The Great Silence*).¹¹ In this context, one must also acknowledge the sheer brutality that expedited the decline of Gaelic when Cromwell and his army massacred thousands in the Gaelic-speaking West of Ireland during the 1649 military sieges at Drogheda and Wexford. The long-standing effects that such mass killings, evictions, and deportations had on the Gaelic language—as well as on Irish art, music, and various other aspects of Irish culture—cannot be underestimated; for, in reality, Cromwell's campaign

¹¹ While a number of scholarly accounts attempt to document the precise events that led to the decline of Irish Gaelic, the arguments Seán de Fréine advances in the classic work *The Great Silence* were used to inform this reading.

succeeded in subduing the entire Irish countryside, and, within four years, Protestantism supplanted Catholicism and English became the official language of the land.¹²

Lisa Lim and Umberto Ansaldo ground their linguistic field research in such multilingual postcolonial spaces in an attempt to dispel the assumption that a shift from one language to another results in the loss of a native tongue at the hand of a conquering language. Rather than viewing a linguistic shift as a loss, the authors suggest, in their article “Identity Alignment in the Multilingual Space,” that scholars must begin to think about language dynamics in terms of what they call “identity alignment,” wherein shifts are “viewed as positive agency on the part of the community of speakers” (219). In such an alignment, the speaker acknowledges but does not contest his/her *imposed*, colonial identity but rather maintains his/her *presumed* ethnic identity. And in so doing, the speaker becomes a member of an assumed multilingual—and global—community and is, in essence, empowered through that kinship.¹³ To add a measure of complexity to Lim

¹² Towards the end of James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus, in one of the novel’s most oft-quoted passages, ruminates on the fact that he speaks English rather than his native Irish, and, in his own mind, he begins to compare the sound of his English tongue to that of the dean of studies:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language (205).

In passages such as this, Stephen joins the ranks of many Irish citizens (Joyce and Beckett included) who feel alienated and distanced from the English language. There is an assumption implicit in Stephen’s logic that makes him feel—much like Chinua Achebe—that he does not have a choice in the language he speaks: “I have been given the language and I intend to use it” (“African Writer” 64). Thus, while Stephen does feel linguistically alienated from English, he feels even more distanced from Gaelic. With some measure of guilt, Stephen’s response to such feelings of alienation is to reject those who subsume themselves with the Gaelic movement and, paradoxically, to seek exile away from the very notion of Irishness.

¹³ While I agree with the authors’ contention that multiculturalism may be a way to overcome static notions of identity and language, it seems that this argument would be better-informed if Lim and Ansaldo were to acknowledge that some scholars may view membership into the larger global community as *disempowering*. The assumption would be that one’s sense of self and culture is diluted by assimilating with the larger international community.

and Ansaldo's study, and to nuance my own argument a bit more, one might note that the politics of 'positive agency' the authors discuss cannot feasibly and realistically happen until a late-colonial or postcolonial period; for, if the process of identity alignment were to take place during the moment of colonization, it would inevitably be associated with a deep sense of guilt or loss on the part of the colonized communities. Thus, readers should be aware that Lim and Ansaldo provide us with a temporally dependent argument, and it is important to recognize the temporal distinctions and sensitivities at work here.

One should also acknowledge the danger implicit in any argument that risks conflating language change with the forced elimination of a language—such as happened with Irish at the hands of the British military and of compulsory English-language schooling. As a postcolonial scholar, I am acutely conscious of the distinction between forced language elimination and more naturally occurring language change. For the purposes of consistency, however, I have chosen to adopt the terminology of linguistics (including Lim and Ansaldo's study), wherein the replacement of one language by another—even when that replacement is the result of colonial domination—is broadly referred to in terms of 'shift,' 'change,' and 'loss.' Nor is such terminology new to Friel scholarship. In *Palimpsest: Two Languages as One in 'Translations'*, Christopher Murray writes that 'as *Translations* opens [...] a major shift, a revolution indeed, is about to take place whereby an old world, a world of traditional modes of [communication], will yield to a new world, let us call it modernity' (96). Richard Pine writes of 'the significance of [the] shift [...] from predominantly Gaelic-speaking to predominantly English-speaking'

and the effects that such a transition has on changing identities (201). And Sean Connolly begins *Translating History: Brian Friel and the Irish Past* by writing: ‘Let us begin with Friel’s presentation of cultural and linguistic change in the early nineteenth century’ (149). By joining these scholars in the use of such potentially loaded terms, I in no way intend to overlook the destruction of Irish-speaking culture, nor am I suggesting that such language change is inherently acceptable. I am making the argument, however, that, given the realities of the inherited Irish language situation, the characters in Friel’s text make some rather telling observations, which I believe adhere to the logic of ‘language shift’ and ‘identity alignment’ that Lim and Ansaldo advance. To add a measure of complexity to Lim and Ansaldo’s study, and to nuance my own argument a bit more, it occurs to me that the politics of “positive agency” the authors discuss cannot feasibly happen until a late-colonial or postcolonial period; for, if the process of identity alignment were to take place during the moment of colonization, it would inevitably be associated with a sense of guilt, of selling out, on the part of the colonized communities. That said, readers must be aware that Lim and Ansaldo provide a temporally dependent argument, and it would behoove us to recognize the period distinction at work here.¹⁴

This idea is certainly counter to many mainstream postcolonial theories, which tend to view language shift primarily as a loss, as it results from a forced choice often due to functions of hegemony. Csilla Bertha, for instance, argues that: “The loss or the violent elimination of language [...] becomes a fatal question, and, if it is treated by

¹⁴ In his magisterial volume, *The Diviner*, Pine devotes a long chapter to *Plays of Language and Time*, which focuses on *Translations* and speaks to this very issue. Pine acknowledges the importance of the interiority of the work, claiming that ‘it is the significance of what is felt by people *as people*, and how their feelings are expressed and negotiated, that constitutes the “aboutness” of the play’ (180).

literature, it demands the form of a tragedy” (208). At Bertha’s insistence, then, scholars should have little choice but to label Brian Friel’s 1981 drama, *Translations*— a work that brings to focus a very important moment in the history of Ireland’s language use—a tragedy. Christopher Murray has done precisely this, claiming that, in this work, “Friel looks back [at the Irish language situation in the mid-1980s] and finds the roots of it in 1833. What he finds he presents as tragic” (98).

Shift as Loss

Translations is set in the townland of Baile Beag, County Donegal, in 1833—a time when hedge schools were being replaced by national schools, when children were being taught exclusively in English, and when the British Royal Army was Anglicizing all Gaelic place names in an attempt to capture and standardize the Irish countryside. Indeed, research into the critical interpretations of *Translations* reveals that this play is most often understood as one in which destruction looms and a romanticized longing for the purer past of Ireland prevails. According to this reading, the story is, above all, about language shift and loss: it is a story “in which the irreparable loss is the loss of communal values, the freedom of independence of the nation or of a community, the loss of its right to its own culture, traditions or language” (Bertha 209).

Yet even Friel tells us that, while his intent was to place issues of language at the forefront of this work, he did not “want to write a threnody [lament] on the death of the Irish language” (qtd. in Murray 95). Shaun Richards, in his compelling study, *Brian Friel: Seizing the Moment of Flux*, reminds us that “as the title of Friel’s play of 1962 made clear, his initial response was an affirmation of that modernizing impulse, for any

lingering allegiance to views and values from the past was deemed to be *The Enemy*

Within" (254). Richards continues:

While recognizing that the modernization process would effect 'radical and far-reaching consequences in the structure and culture of our society' [Friel] considered the alternative to change was the guaranteed 'stagnation and death' of Ireland as a 'cultural and political entity.' And any resistance to the process could only lead to what [Friel] termed 'an unhealthy conservatism' (255).

Thus, to read *Translations* as a text which laments the loss of Irish language and culture not only goes against Friel's claims as playwright but also seems to overlook the fact that notions of a traditional Irish language, of a pure past with one untouched tongue, may themselves be somewhat fictitious—and, indeed, are presented as fictitious in the play itself.

In their very useful text, *Language and Tradition in Ireland*, Maria Tymoczko and Colin Ireland begin by outlining the varied "linguistic and cultural interface" of Ireland

(1). They write:

[I]n Ireland we can chart a persistent history of linguistic mixing. From the pre-Celtic languages and the various dialects of the Celtic invaders to the integration of Latin after the conversion of Irish to Christianity by British clerics, from the linguistic diversity encountered by Irish missionaries abroad to the assimilation of Scandinavian dialects introduced by the Vikings, the early history of Ireland is rich in multilingualism. The Anglo-Norman conquest brought still other languages to Ireland at the end of the twelfth century, with the armies and settlers speaking more than one dialect of French, Occitan, Welsh, Flemish, and English. Most of these early linguistic groups had turned to the Irish language by the start of the Tudor period, but it is important to mark them, because they remind us that Irish-language culture was not pure, essentialist, singular, isolated, or untouched by other languages and cultures before the time it began its serious negotiations with English. Irish-language culture [...] had already been mixed and hybridized through the course of time, changed by countless cultural contacts with people speaking many different languages (1-2).

What this context reveals is the need to define Irish society—and perhaps, by extension, all postcolonial societies—in terms of its multifaceted linguistic repertoire rather than in terms of a singular, static tongue that speaks of imposition and colonial domination.

“One aspect that keeps eluding me,” Friel wrote when writing *Translations*, is “the wholeness, integrity of the Gaelic past. Maybe because I do not believe in it” (qtd. in Pine 187).

Vincent Cheng argues in *Joyce, Race and Empire* that to overlook the complexity of the Irish identity is to reinscribe the forces of colonialism. By grounding his discussion in racial politics and identity construction, Cheng contends that monolithic representations of the Irish validate the dominant (read English) racialized discourse of the nineteenth century, which stereotyped the Irish, among other things, as wild white “negroes,” “helpless idiots,” “anthropoid apes,” and, tellingly, primitive and essentialized Celts (Cheng 37, 41). L.P. Curtis, detailing the mentality of the English, expounds on this latter characterization:

Where the Celt was child-like, the Anglo-Saxon was mature; instead of emotional instability, he could boast of self-control; he was energetic not lazy, rational not superstitious, civilized not primitive, clean not dirty, ready to forgive not vengeful, and prepared to live under the rule of law (qtd. in Cheng 53).

Such a mythology, supported in whole by binary oppositions, reveals that “racism and ethnocentrism depend on static essences and absolute difference” (Cheng 53). Yet, as Cheng is quick to point out, “people and populations contain *multiplicitous* and *heterogeneous* characterizations of both individual and cultural difference that cannot be so conveniently (and logocentrically) named and labeled” (53; emphasis added). We can

thus conclude, as Cheng does, that monolithic representations of peoples and cultures do nothing more than perpetuate the troubling Us/Them binary that argues for racial purity and superiority. In the context of my own discussion of language shift, we can usefully extend Cheng's claim to note the ways that the Gaelic language is, like the Irish "race," more of a composite of the various languages and cultures which make it up—languages and cultures, it is worth mentioning, that are continually caught up in the processes of evolution and change.

Ultimately this discussion—of defining postcolonial societies in terms of the multiplicity of languages that make up their linguistic repertoire—is, as it were, a double-edged sword. For while scholars must continually remember that native languages decline because they are "crushed by agencies of the British state, backed up where necessary by military force" (Connolly 150), they must also acknowledge that such a stance leads to the dismissal of linguistic and cultural hybridities and identities (which, as Tymoczko and Ireland point out, were already manifest far before the processes of colonization entered the scene). Thus, it is far more useful to acknowledge that all languages are, indeed, hybrid, and that all languages are constantly evolving and changing. And yes, while history does record many examples of changes in language being fueled by the processes of invasion, colonization, and migration, it is obvious that even without these kinds of influences, languages do change as speakers adopt new words, sentence structures, and sounds, and then spread them throughout the community and transmit them to the next generation.

Recognizing the multiple inheritances—and the multiple languages—that are always already at work within Irish culture, this chapter will thus examine Brian Friel’s 1981 drama, *Translations*, to show how Friel embeds a cacophony of multiplicity, a fluidity of language, in this play.¹⁵ The effect, I hope to show, is that such multiplicity allows for the possibility of a new linguistic expression to emerge over time, while mitigating the assumption that when a culture broadens its language use to become more multicultural (even if this takes place through conquest and force), some type of cultural loss results. In other words, I hope to show the ways in which the readings of literary texts—particularly literary texts from multilingual postcolonial societies—can benefit from this additive approach to language shift, as opposed to the subtractive approach to multilingualism (wherein one overlooks the processes of change inherent in all languages and assumes that new language use necessitates the death of native tongues).

Freeplay of Language

Translations’s most “pervasive, profound, and paradoxical” perspective “is built into its dramatic structure: it is an Irish-language play in English. [It is also] an English-language play, which metaphorically, manages to pass for an Irish-language play” (Achilles 126). Alan Peacock expounds on the “layering” of language in the work, noting that “*Translations* does some remarkable things by any standards” (121). “It

¹⁵ Suzy Holstein, in her very useful article “Carrying across into Silence: Brian Friel’s *Translations*,” also discusses Friel’s use of multiplicity, although her discussion is posited not in terms of linguistic constructs and language use, but rather in terms of naming, defining, and the “entitlement to identity” that comes when we “designate ourselves and that which we believe belongs to us” (1). While Holstein offers a very nice reading of the text, there are many other compelling textual examples and many important connections to outside texts, including Friel’s *The Communication Cord*—a play, incidentally, that the author has acknowledged should be read in tandem with *Translations*—that are openly ignored or dismissed.

brings to the modern popular stage quotations from Homer delivered *in the Greek* [...]; the characters from time to time communicate with each other in Latin [... and] the audience is also expected to digest snatches of Gaelic and take an interest in etymological speculation in all these languages” (Peacock 121). In a thematic attempt to mirror this type of multiplicity, Friel begins by establishing a distinction between the English soldiers and the Irish citizens throughout the work. Friel characterizes the English as monolinguals whose desire to eliminate traditional Irish place names results in nothing but a very palpable anxiety and a map, which, once translated into English, is then re-translated (at least through speech) into Gaelic towards the end of the work. On the other hand, the Irish emerge as bilinguals, gregarious and social, multifaceted and fluid. It is interesting to note that, in what appears to be a very strategic move, Friel’s characterization works to deflate the stereotypes and expectations postcolonial readers have come to expect: in Friel’s text, the multilingual “natives” are anything but primitive, backward, and uneducated, and the monolingual British imperialists are hardly well-traveled and metropolitan. I believe such an obvious reversal—with its apparent emphasis on linguistic constructs and multiplicity—perfectly maps the relation between logocentric thinking and poststructuralist literary theory.¹⁶ In this way, it would be wise

¹⁶ My reading here diverges from several critical interpretations of Friel’s use of poststructuralism. In a very convincing argument, F.C. McGrath notes that “*Translations* demonstrates a keen awareness of the relations between language, politics, and history” while *The Communication Cord* “subverts the attitudes toward history and language supported by *Translations*” (541-543). Richard Kearney contends that, “If *Translations* tended to mythologize language,” *The Communication Cord* “demythologizes it [and]... de-centers all easy assumptions about the retrieval of such lost, cultural origins” (52). While I do recognize that *The Communication Cord* relies heavily on many poststructuralist paradigms and theories, I do not think we can dismiss the ways that the Irish characters throughout *Translations* also engage with these theoretical underpinnings. That said, it seems to me that the divide between logocentrism and poststructuralism in Friel’s work is not between *Translations* and *The Communication Cord*, but rather between the Irish and the English as they navigate the processes of colonialism.

for readers to consider the British officers as *structuralist* engineers: “We name a thing and—bang! it leaps into existence,” the Irish-born Owen tells the audience once he begins cartography work for the Royal Engineers (56). Above all, the British officers are engaged in the act of “translation,”¹⁷ which, as Helen Lojek reminds readers, “involves the desire to understand, to find meaning, to *make* meaning if that is necessary” (83).

In her very articulate reading of *Translations*, Suzy Clarkson Holstein writes that, in this text, “We discover [...] a fundamental difference not only in what words mean but in *how* they mean” (2):

Hugh tells Captain Lancey that English seems “particularly suited” for the “purposes of commerce,” and his observation reveals an important point of divergence. For both military and economic purposes, language that approximates a one-to-one correspondence between the name and the named is desirable. Further, eradicating competing names, such as those in native languages, promotes efficiency and simplifies both commercial and military work. Static language is clarity; dynamic language signals chaos (2).

While Holstein’s words—that “static language is clarity; dynamic language signals chaos”—are certainly correct and align, as I have said, with the dichotomy Friel establishes between the monolingual English soldiers and the multilingual Irish residents, her argument would be better informed if it were to provide, as evidence, a very applicable scene from Friel’s 1983 drama *The Communication Cord*.

In this play, two central characters, Jack and Tim, dominate the action of Act One. Jack, the stage directions tell us, “is a barrister” (12). He is “quick-talking, self-confident, able to handle everybody and every situation” (12). In contrast, Tim is an

¹⁷ One could rightfully claim here that Lojek has simplified this point; for, as Nietzsche reminds us, “translation [is] a form of conquest” (qtd. in Pine 191).

insufferable academic “without tenure” (18). He is “relaxed and assured only when he is talking about his work: he is doing his Ph.D. in an aspect of linguistics” (12). As the audience waits for the plotline to develop fully, Jack, always polite and social, begins to ask Tim about his current—perpetually unfinished—thesis:

Jack: Your thesis is nearly finished, is not it?

Tim: I do not know. Maybe.

Jack: What’s it on again?

Tim: Talk. [...]

Jack: Your writing your thesis on what we’re doing now?

Tim: It’s fascinating, you know. Are you aware of what we’re doing now?

Jack: We’re chatting, aren’t we?

Tim: (*Warming up*) Exactly. But look at the process involved. You wish to know what my thesis is about and I wish to tell you. Information has to be imparted. A message has to be sent from me to you and you have to receive that message. How do we achieve that communication?

Jack: You just tell me.

Tim: Exactly. Words. Language. An agreed code. I encode my message; I transmit it to you; you receive the message and decode it. [...] All social behaviour, the entire social order, depends on our communicational structures, on words mutually agreed on and mutually understood. Without that agreement, without that shared code, we have chaos (18-19).

This exchange is a perfect summation of both structural linguistics and the processes that the British officers are undertaking to rename the Irish landscape. Indeed, the social order of Britain will depend, in a very real sense, on the reconstructed place names, for, as Tim notes, in order for language to be an effective means of communication, it must be

“mutually agreed on” and “mutually understood” (18). Which is to say, there must be a “shared code” between England and its colony, for without this agreement, the control the Royal Engineers are seeking to secure would vanish; hence, we have the employment of Owen/Roland, whose sole task is to translate the Irish place names from Gaelic to English. Yet, as is obvious from the text, the great disparity between the logocentric fixity of the Royal Engineers (whose sole job is to make meaning through the act of conquest) and the multivalent freeplay of the Irish citizens (who celebrate the *jouissance* inherent in language, indeed in translation) is, at times, often irreconcilable.

Before Captain Lancey (the first British officer to enter the stage) ever utters a word, the stage directions make note of the fact that “his skill is with deeds, not words” (31). Lancey’s name makes an appearance in the text far before his character appears, and we learn from Hugh that, in an earlier encounter, Lancey “explained that he does not speak Irish” (23):

Hugh: Latin? I asked. None. Greek? Not a syllable. He speaks—on his own admission—only English; and to his credit he seemed suitably *verecund*—James?

James: *Verecundus*—humble (23).

Lancey begins addressing the Irish-speaking community in County Donegal with the following remark: “I’ll say what I have to say, if I may, and as briefly as possible. Do they speak *any* English, Roland?” (32). This question is not met with a firm response from Owen, although he does promise to translate on behalf of the foreign officer, whom, we are told, is “uneasy with people—especially civilians, especially these foreign civilians” (31). Lancey “clears his throat” and begins to speak “as if he were addressing

children”: “You may have seen me—seen me—working in this section—section?—working. We are here—here—in this place—you understand?—to make a map—a map—a map and...” (32). It is at this moment that Jimmy Jack, the “Infant Prodigy,” interrupts Captain Lancey by asking, in Latin, “Nonne Latine loquitur?” (or, “does he not speak Latin?”) (32; translation mine). Paradoxically, Lancey’s indignant response, “I do not speak Gaelic, sir,” does nothing but answer Jimmy Jack’s inquiry (33).¹⁸ It is moments such as these, which dot the landscape of *Translations* as often as the drunken Hugh turns for a pint, that reveal the great collision between Lancey’s desire to make meaning and the ambiguity that necessarily resides in the gap between differing languages. Hence Lancey stutters; he mumbles; he begins to feel timid and apprehensive, so much so that, as the scene continues, twice the stage directions interrupt to remind Owen to nod or smile “reassuringly” at the frustrated British officer (33).

Lieutenant Yolland, himself a Royal Engineer, also first appears awkward and unsure about his language use: “I—I—I’ve nothing to say—really—” until he finally confesses that he feels “very foolish to—to—to be working here and not to speak your language” (35). With this admission behind him, he and Hugh are eventually able to ruminate on the mystical power imbued in multiple language use:

Yolland: I mean—I feel so cut off from the people here. And I was trying to explain a few minutes ago how remarkable a community this is. To meet people like yourself [Hugh] and Jimmy Jack who actually

¹⁸ The humor of this scene is entirely reminiscent of an account Ismail Talib provides concerning “the experience of two linguists when they were in Ireland” (44). Quoting J.C. Maher, Talib writes: “Late one night, eminent linguist Joshua Fishman and a colleague were crossing the lobby of their Dublin hotel when the cleaner leaned on his mop and explained ‘God love you. Two sons of Ireland speaking the language of their fathers.’ Fishman and Robert Cooper, who had just flown in from Tel Aviv, paused from speaking Yiddish, thanked the old man, and went on to the bar” (44).

converse in Greek and Latin. And your place names—what was the one we came across this morning?—Termon, from Terminus, the god of boundaries. It—it—it’s really astonishing.

Hugh: We like to think we endure around truths immemorially posited.

Yolland: And your Gaelic literature—you’re a poet yourself—

Hugh: Only in Latin, I am afraid.

Yolland: I understand it’s enormously rich and ornate.

Hugh: Indeed, Lieutenant. A rich language. A rich literature. You’ll find, sir, that certain cultures expend on their vocabularies and syntax acquisitive energies and ostentations entirely lacking in their material lives. I suppose you could call us a spiritual people (50).

The reason a scene such as this is so striking is that, for the first time, Yolland begins to view language through the lens of the Irish experience, as something that develops, transitions, and changes over time. Language thus becomes something dynamic—something that derives meaning from other languages and outside sources, something that speaks to immortal truths and energies.

Viewing language in this way mocks the project set forth by the British officers, who, in their attempt to rename the Irish countryside, maintain an absolute belief in language’s ability to control and create order. The English are particularly adept, as Suzy Holstein reminds us, at creating order through language, as, traditionally, the English language has been used for commerce, taxation, and law; even Hugh explains to Captain Lancey that, when the Irish do, “on occasion,” speak English, it is usually “outside the parish” and “for the purposes of commerce” (23). What’s more, we must not overlook the fact that Captain Lancey’s presence in Ireland shows his language also to be the language of war. Even the Captain himself recognizes this, explaining to the Irish citizens

who are concerned about the military operation in their townland, that the renaming project is “being done by soldiers [...] so that the entire basis of land valuation can be reassessed for purposes of more equitable taxation” (34). Owen, somewhat arbitrarily, translates this point, and it is most telling that he truncates the terms “taxation” and “law” in his retelling: “This new map will take the place of the estate-agent’s map so that from now on you will know exactly what is yours in law” (34).

Nor is the fact that English should be reserved for military and economic purposes lost on Hugh.¹⁹ As Hugh dictates, to the Irish-speaking community, the events of his first meeting with Captain Lancey, he falls back on the *us versus them, monolingual versus bilingual* binary that Friel so obviously establishes throughout Acts One and Two:

Hugh: Indeed—he [Captain Lancey] voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that a few of us did, on occasion—outside the parish of course—and then usually for the purposes of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited—(*shouts*) and a slice of soda bread—and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues made a happier conjugation—Doalty?

Doalty: *Conjugo*—I join together.

Hugh: Indeed—English, I suggested, couldn’t really express us. And again to his credit he acquiesced to my logic...(23).

¹⁹ I cannot help but think that Friel is being a bit tongue-in-cheek when he has Hugh—the multilingual poet—explain the benefits of speaking English for the purposes of commerce; for, clearly, while it is impossible to deny that English has traditionally been used for economic purposes, Friel would certainly acknowledge that the English language has also been the impetus for great literature—indeed, even great *Irish* literature. Just as Joyce acknowledges in the “Aeolus” episode of *Ulysses*, that the English were particularly adept at colonizing the countryside (“It is meet to be here” [7.490, 494]) and establishing the placement of waterclosets (“Let us construct a watercloset” [7.494]), he is also very much aware of the deliberate choice many Irish writers made to appropriate the English language, to take “possession of the language,” as Kenner notes (qtd. in Marre 378). While scholars continue to debate the effect that such a strategy has had on both Irish and English culture and language, Kenner successfully argues, in his work *A Colder Eye: The Modern Irish Writers*, that this type of linguistic appropriation effectively enabled the Irish to disengage English from the literary history of England.

Here, then, the audience is again made aware of the great absurdity that is the project of the British officers. Lancey, apparently (and I say this because we receive his sentiment as a result of Hugh's somewhat drunken paraphrase) has agreed that English words do not rightfully express Irish culture, and yet, the project continues as though the renaming will be a success for Britain and its colony.²⁰

As Act Two, Scene One opens, Friel's stage directions provide a very clear summary of the project at hand: "Owen [...] is to take each of the Gaelic names—every hill, stream, rock, even every patch of ground which possessed its own distinctive Irish name—and Anglicise it, either by changing it into its approximate English sound or by translating it into English words" (38). As George O'Brien writes, "to change names thus is to replace [...] assumptions and, in the case in point, to speak of the townland of Ballybeg not merely in terms of hill and stream, but in terms of control, such as law property, taxation and the like" (qtd. in Holstein, 2). The problem is that, for the Irish, the realities of war, taxation, property, and law do not seem to coincide with their own linguistic heritage and their current linguistic needs. In Holstein's words:

Those who have always been at home in the land may accept or even value multiple names and ambiguity. So perhaps for the native Irish [...], a "both/and" perspective is possible. Richard Kearney proposes such an

²⁰ In making such a statement, I am referring to what I see as one of the greatest ironies of the text. While it is clear that Owen and Yolland spend much of the first two acts "translating" the Irish countryside from Irish Gaelic to "the King's good English," their work is completely obliterated in the play's final act (30). It is at this point that Lancey enters the hedge school seeking recompense for Yolland, one of his missing (and presumed dead) soldiers. Lancey asserts that if no information is received as to where can be found, the British Officers will "embark on a series of evictions" wherein they will level "every abode" in Ballybeg (80). Following this, he orders Owen to retranslate the local place names (from English back to Irish) for the students in attendance; thus, for example, Lancey says "Burnfoot," and Owen translates this back to the original, "Bun na hAbhann" (80). Many scholars, such as Sarah Wheaton, read this scene as one where "the brutal, destructive force underlying the Ordnance Survey project is dully exposed" (243). It seems to me, however, that this obvious undoing of Owen and Yolland's work gives a measure of power to the Irish citizens and shows the British Name-Book to have been a "mistake—nothing to do with us" (87).

idea theoretically: “Could it be that the Irish mind, in its various expressions, often flew in the face of logocentrism by showing that meaning is not only determined by a logic that centralizes and censors, but also by a logic which disseminates a structured dispersal exploring what is *other*, what is irreducibly diverse?” Paradoxically, for the native Irish, “other” may even include one’s individual identity, as Richard Pine notes when he writes that the Irish “suffer from the inability to say ‘I am’: there is no expression in Irish [...] for the present tense of the verb *to be*. Self is perceived as otherness.” From such a perspective, multiple names for one person or place may not provoke uneasiness or disorientation (2).

In the context of *Translations*, this discussion adequately explains why Owen sees little threat in the fact that he has been renamed “Roland” by the British engineers who, apparently, “cannot pronounce Owen”: “Is not it ridiculous,” he questions (36). “Owen—Roland—what the hell. It’s only a name. It’s the same me, is not it? Well, is not it?” (37). In posing such a profound rhetorical question, Roland enacts a version of Lim and Ansaldo’s argument, as he makes it very clear that his own identity is not dependent on the confining structures of language—that, in short, one’s identity is not threatened by language use. *I am who I am*, he seems to be saying, *regardless of what I am called*.²¹

Owen also holds, as Suzy Holstein notes, to “the freedom of ambiguity, of the ‘both/and’ perspective” in that, as a translator, he takes certain liberties with his interpretations (3). When Lancey declares that the “enormous” task of translating “has been embarked on so that the military authorities will be equipped with up-to-date and accurate information on every corner of this part of the Empire,” Owen intentionally mistranslates this information, proclaiming to his fellow Irishmen that “the job is being

²¹My reading of this passage differs significantly from Holstein’s. While I maintain that Owen is comfortable with multiplicity and fluidity—and that his identity is not dependent on that which he is named—Holstein contends that Owen is uncomfortable “relinquishing the power to denominate himself” (1). She thus believes the answer to the question Owen poses (“[I]t’s the same me, is not it?”) becomes “probably not” (1).

done by soldiers because they are skilled in this work” (33-34). What’s more, when Manus questions Owen as to “what sort of translation” he is providing, Owen shows little anxiety or disorientation regarding his flavorful interpretations, declaring, instead, that “uncertainty of meaning is incipient poetry” (36).

And, it would seem, that even the Irish place names in the text, those that Owen/Roland and the British Corps of Engineers are so feverishly working to translate, exist in this realm of incongruity and freeplay where meaning is multifarious and, above all, uncertain. Consider, for example, that when Yolland questions the proper English translation of the Irish town “Banowen,” Owen consults various texts and comes up with a few potential place names:

The list of freeholders calls it Owenmore—that’s completely wrong: Owenmore’s the big river at the west end of the parish. (*another text*) And in the grand jury list it’s called—God!—Binhone!—wherever they got that. I suppose we could Anglicise it to Bunowen; but somehow that’s neither fish nor flesh (39).

Several lines later, Owen and Yolland share a colorful exchange as Owen attempts to determine the proper name from the area of Druim Dubh:

Owen: Let’s get back to the job. Druim Dubh—what’s it called in the jury lists? (*Consults texts.*)

Yolland: Some people here resent us.

Owen: Dramduff—wrong as usual.

Yolland: I was passing a little girl yesterday and she spat at me.

Owen: And it’s Drimdoo here. What’s it called in the registry? [...]

Owen: [...] Dramduffy! Nobody ever called it Dramduffy. Take your pick of those three (43-44).

Here, Friel's dramatization depicts perfectly the ways that the Irish language encapsulates what Hugh calls "a syntax opulent with tomorrows" (51). As the astute reader looks ahead, it becomes clear that the change in place names from Irish to English does nothing but mirror the various translations already imposed on the land by the Irish. This is why, for Owen, it makes little difference which of the four place names—Druim Dubh, Dramduff, Drimdoon, or Drumduffy—Yolland chooses for translation. For, built into the various place names—through the Irish "syntax opulent with tomorrows"—there always already exists a fluidity of language (51). Words are "signals" and "counters," Hugh reminds us, "they are not immortal" (52).

Returning to the logocentric/multivalent paradigm outlined in the beginning of this chapter, it is worth noting that, as characters comfortable with incongruity and multiplicity, the Irish individuals in this work appear entirely at ease with the freeplay that comes from their decentered perspective. With the exception of Sarah, a character whose "speech defect is so bad that all her life she has been considered locally to be dumb," each of the Irish characters we encounter speak at least one language in addition to their native tongue (1). Owen, as translator, clearly speaks both Gaelic and English; yet, perhaps more impressive, is the headmaster Hugh who speaks Latin, Greek, Gaelic, and English all interchangeably. Jimmy Jack, Hugh's most faithful disciple, speaks Gaelic, Latin, and Greek throughout the play; he addresses the British officers in Latin, and, in the words of Holstein, he "carries the worlds of ancient Greece and Rome across into Ireland" (9). We learn in the beginning of Act One that Maire knows precisely one phrase in English—"In Norfolk we besport ourselves around the maypoll"—yet she

displays an insatiable desire to learn the language fluently (8). As an advocate for progress, she claims that the Irish “should all be learning to speak English [...] The old language is a barrier to modern progress. [...] I do not want Greek. I do not want Latin. I want English” (24-25).

In addition to the multiplicities of place names and character identities, the very structure of Friel’s work also experiments with various modes of repetition, a multiplicity of form. Throughout Act One, Bridget, one of the assumed pupils at headmaster Hugh’s hedge school, substantiates each of the points she makes by beginning with the phrase “Our Seamus says” (13, 15, 19). In addition, Manus continually encourages the mute Sarah to repeat the phrase “My name is Sarah” (2, 3, 29, 81), while Jimmy makes it clear—by stating three times in three lines—that all he is looking for is “companionship” (86). Most importantly, however, much of dialogue throughout *Translations* enacts some type of retelling, and this is a linguistic strategy that Tim, the junior linguistics professor, carefully outlines in *The Communication Cord*.

According to Tim, “statement transference” is one type of rhetorical retelling that takes place when one speaker attempts to mirror the language of a second speaker, “imputing” to the second speaker a phrase that he or she may or may not have uttered (46). In this way, the speaker “seeks confirmation for his own sentiments and suggests to listeners outside the dialogue that” both speakers are of a “unanimous” sentiment (46).

The most obvious instance of statement transference occurs in *The Communication Cord* when Tim entertains Senator Doctor Donovan at a restored thatch cottage, close to the sea in the remote townland of Ballybeg, that he is pretending his

family owns. Tim is seeking the approval of Senator Doctor Donovan, as he has taken an interest in Senator Donovan's daughter, Susan, and he believes that the home—"every detail" of which is "accurate of its time"—will speak to the Senator's discerning taste for all-things "authentic" (11). As Tim introduces Senator Donovan to Nora Dan—a neighbor in Ballybeg and the one character, incidentally, who makes an appearance in both *The Communication Cord* and *Translations*—the Senator remarks that this home is about "Renewal, Nora. Restoration. Fulfillment. [Being] back to the true centre" (43). Lines later, in speaking with Tim and Susan, Donovan remarks: "Indeed. Excellent. You've no idea, Susie, how special, how very special all this is to me. [...] You're right, Tim, absolutely right. This is the true centre" (46). Now, as readers, we are aware that Tim has never used the phrase "this is the true centre," and that the doctor is merely attributing to Tim a phrase that he himself has used earlier in the play. The irony in this scene, then, becomes palpable when we return to Tim's explanation of statement transference: that by using such a rhetorical tool, the speaker desires to suggest to outside listeners that "he and I are unanimous in [the] sentiment" (46). Tim quickly reminds us that when it comes to the thatched cottage being the "true center," he and Donovan are "not at all" unanimous (46). Which is to say, Donovan uses this rhetorical tool of *agreement* to conceal the *disagreement* that threatens to taint his relationship with Tim and, tangentially, Tim's relationship with Susan. Here, we have another moment of mirroring and repetition, as the Senator's use of statement transference is perfectly analogous to the central setting and theme of the play, wherein Jack and Tim desire to use

the *authenticity*²² of the home to mask the *inauthenticity* of the “roles” they are playing in their attempt to dupe the Senator Doctor (19).

But just as certain characters seem to work within the structure of statement transference Friel provides, other characters seem to engage in another type of rhetorical retelling that seems to be structured in opposition to statement transference. In this second schematic, instead of uttering one’s own phrase and then seeking to attribute it to another character (as we see with statement transference), the characters playfully engage in a type of reverse chiasmus where they actually borrow or “possess”—and then appropriate as their own—the language spoken by another character. *The Communication Cord* evidences this most appropriately when Jack begins to explain the intricacies of the refurbished home to Tim. He notes: “Listen, professor. This is where we all come from. This is our first cathedral. This shaped our souls” (15). Tim then appropriates Jack’s verbiage, using this exact sentiment to earn the Senator’s endorsement:

Donovan: Oh, you’re no amateur at this, Tim! You know your heritage!
 Oh, you and I are going to have a lot to say to each other!
 Marvellous! Just marvelous!

Tim: This is where we all come from.

Donovan: Indeed.

Tim: This is our first cathedral.

Donovan: Amen to that.

²² Consider the stage directions from Act One, which explain that “every detail of the kitchen and its furnishings is accurate of its time. But one quickly senses something false about the place. It is too pat, too ‘authentic’. It is in fact a restored house, a reproduction, an artifact of today making obeisance to a home of yesterday” (11).

Tim: This shaped our souls.

Donovan: Ah (32-33).

It is in Senator Doctor Donovan's response—"Indeed [...]. Amen to that. [...] Ah."—that we can locate the success of this repetitive technique (33). For while the stage directions do tell us that Donovan looks "quizzically at Tim" throughout this exchange, questioning whether "this young man is not mocking me," his later comments reveal that, at least for the moment, he is enamored with both Tim, his host, and the "touchstone," the "apotheosis," the home from Ireland's past (31, 33).

Such a rhetorical strategy is not unique to *The Communication Cord*, however. Throughout *Translations*, Friel openly makes use of—and acknowledges as an important reference for readers of this work—many of the linguistic concepts George Steiner discusses in his 1975 study, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translations*. One argument central to Steiner's work, is that "simple repetition changes meaning," and Friel uses this technique, in conjunction with the theories of Deconstruction, to show the ways in which the Irish are not married to either literal interpretation or fixity within *Translations* (qtd. in Lojek 85). Just as Steiner contends that "simple repetition changes meaning," Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist project rejects the idea that a mirror-like correspondence exists between signifier and signified. Derrida thus maintains that "the repetition of a word (within one and the same language) cannot be viewed as a reproduction of the same, the identical or the synonymous, for whenever a sign is repeated it (re-)appears in a different context and the shift in context alters its meaning" (Zima 348). According to Derrida, this process of *itérabilité* (or *iterability*) explains how

even simple repetition results not in the consolidation but rather the disintegration of meaning.

This theoretical stance greatly informs any reading of *Translations*. For, much like the children's game of telephone, where meaning is altered through the utterance of a repeated phrase that is circulated from person to person, both the history of Ireland's place names, and Yolland and Maire's romantic exchange, show the multiplicity—and the subsequent departure from meaning—that manifests itself in the types of repetition Steiner and Derrida examine.

According to Richard Kearney, the local place names on Ireland's map hold a “stored heritage of local history which each Gaelic name recollects and secretes” (4). While I certainly agree with Kearney's assumption that language “secretes” the meaning and history behind a word, his argument seems to overlook the ways that such histories and heritages are passed down through the generations. When Owen begins to explain to Yolland the origins of the name “Tobair Vree,” he acknowledges that that he is aware of such a history only because his grandfather recited (or *repeated*) the history to him when he was a boy. Owen makes note of the fact that, somewhere along its complicated history, the place name of Tobair Vree became distorted: “Tobair means a well. But what does Vree mean? It's a corruption of Brian—Brian—an erosion of Tobair Bhriain” (53).

Speaking to the stored heritage and local history Kearney discusses (and Owen's own history confirms), we can rightfully assume that the place name of Tobair Bhriain was continually reinscribed throughout the generations until, at last, the place name Tobair Vree became, to use Tim's verbiage, the agreed-upon code. The important point

here is Steiner's contention that "simple repetition changes meaning," and this is upheld by Owen's lengthy description of the history of Tobair Vree. As Owen discusses the history of the crossroads, it becomes strikingly obvious that, in a manner reminiscent of the telephone game described in detail above, the residents of Baile Beag are no longer able to recall the meaning behind the original utterance of Tobair Bhriain. All that is left, as Owen clearly states, is a name on a map, a tracing of "a man ["Brian"] long dead, long forgotten, his name 'eroded' beyond recognition, whose trivial little story nobody in the parish remembers" (53). And it is here, in Ireland's inability to remember the cultural heritage of its own language, that we can identify a subtle tracing of the deconstructive mode of translation; according to Eve Tabor Bannet, this means killing the original language, the original context, in order to supplant it with something new. Hence we have Tobair Bhriain and Tobair Vree, Druim Dubh and Dramduffy.

Although the importance of this scene has been recounted by many scholars interested in the translatability of Irish place names, this scene is, in fact, also crucial in terms of the larger discussion of language change. What we see in the transition from Tobair Bhriain to Tobair Vree and Druim Dubh to Dramduffy is what this chapter has previously mentioned: that the idea of language death, or the sudden termination of one language at the expense of another, is, indeed, inaccurate. Friel clearly understands that languages are *always* in the process of dying and that mourning for or holding onto a fading dialect may, as we have seen with Achebe's Okonkwo (in Chapter 2 of this dissertation), prove disastrous. Thus, as Owen recounts the lengthy history of Tobair Vree, readers are to be aware of the fact that language usage is not as simple as a choice

between Gaelic and English: as informed readers, we must recognize that all languages are, indeed, hybridized versions of the languages that come before it—and that current languages will undoubtedly transform to become the composite of the language trends that will inevitably follow.

In a conversation that enacts another fine example of simple repetition, and is analogous to the *iterability* inherent in the forgotten names and histories of Tobair Vree, Yolland and Maire engage in a very rhythmic dialogue shortly after they are first introduced to each other at Hugh’s hedge school. Through their translator, Owen, we become privy to the following exchange:

Owen (to Maire): You know George [Yolland], do not you?

Maire: We wave to each other across the fields.

Yolland: Sorry—sorry?

Owen: She says you wave to each other across the fields.

Yolland: Yes, we do; oh yes, indeed we do.

Maire: What’s he saying?

Owen: He says you wave to each other across the fields.

Maire: That’s right. So we do.

Yolland: What’s she saying? (59).

Readers can most easily identify the beauty of this scene through the cacophony of sound and the multiplicity of voices that Owen, a singular character, is forced to take on as translator and mediator. For in his one voice, his translations—“She says you wave to each other across the fields,” and “He says you wave to each other across the fields”—

show the ways that both Maire (understanding only Irish) and Yolland (understanding only English) are able to disestablish the primacy and centrality of meaning—of language—in order to meet in a place of neutrality: “Does he know what I am saying?” Maire asks, to which Owen replies, “not a word” (60).

Despite Owen’s blatant response that Yolland does not understand a word Maire is speaking, various critics continue to argue that meaning *is* exchanged in this scene. Helen Lojek maintains that the repeated phrases Yolland and Maire exchange evidence that they are somehow able to communicate “without language and with a logic all [their] own” (86). Consider, for example, the beginning of Act Two Scene Two, when Yolland and Maire—now devoid of their translator, Owen—“run on, hand-in-hand,” and, as readers, we are able to enjoy the following exchange where Lojek’s communication “without language” manifests itself:

Maire: The grass must be wet. My feet are soaking.

Yolland: Your feet must be wet. The grass is soaking [...].

Maire: Say anything at all. I love the sound of your speech [...].

Yolland: Yes—yes? Go on—go on—say anything at all—I love the sound of your speech [...].

Maire: Do not stop—I know what you’re saying.

Yolland: I would tell you how I want to be here—to live here—always—with you
—always, always.

Maire: ‘Always’? What is that word—‘always’?

Yolland: Yes—yes, always.

Maire: You’re trembling.

Yolland: Yes, I am trembling because of you [...].

Maire: I want to live with you—anywhere—anywhere at all—always—always.

Yolland: ‘Always’? What is that word—‘always’? (62-67).

In her summary of this scene, Lojek argues that, “in a way, meaning is repeated in this exchange. But in addition to the altered meaning which derives simply from this—or any—repetition, the variation of word order [‘The grass must be wet. My feet are soaking.’ And, ‘your feet must be wet. The grass is soaking.’] reveals opposing deductive and inductive logics” (85). Which is to say, while the words are the same, we are able to use our knowledge of the characters and their unique cultural experiences to reveal the underlying differences in meaning. Thus, “Maire loves the sound of Yolland’s voice” simply because she happens to be infatuated with “the sound of the English which she is eager to learn in order to translate herself out of Ireland” (Lojek 85). Likewise, “Yolland loves the sound of Maire’s voice,” because he is particularly enamored with “the rhythms of her Irish language, which enchants him as much as the Irish landscape where he would like to be more at home” (85-86).

What we can take from the slippage of meaning manifest in this fictional conversation is something that this chapter has made note of twice before. It seems that if we consider, as evidence, the fact that Friel uses the guise of *authenticity* to mask the *inauthenticity* of the cabin—and when we recall that he uses the appearance of *agreement* to hide the *disagreement* between Senator Doctor Donovan and Tim—we might well conclude that, in this scene, he is clearly employing a semblance of *communication* to conceal the *miscommunication* that effectively taints the relationship between Maire and

Yolland. Thus, while it is tempting to succumb to Lojek's argument that the couple *is* able to communicate outside of their spoken languages,²³ it seems to me that such critical interpretations fail to account for the very compelling rhetorical technique of masking that Friel uses throughout both *Translations* and *The Communication Cord*.

What's more, when we return to Derrida's claim regarding the processes of repetition and *iterability*, we again arrive at the fact that when Maire and Yolland speak, the signifiers of one speaker are being replaced (or translated) by the competing signifiers—even the competing language—of the second speaker. Thus, each speaker brings to the conversation an endless chain of new connotations, which results in a continual shift in meaning. Much like the processes of translation,²⁴ which Derrida sees as *aporetic*, the exchange between Maire (the Irishwoman) and Yolland (the one British soldier who has attempted to understand Gaelic and the intricacies of the Irish language) shows how communication is at once necessary yet entirely impossible.

Lim and Ansaldo's study might suggest the possibility that *Translations* is less about the loss of native language and more about the freeplay of possibilities that are evident once a community of speakers is willing to embrace another culture, indeed another language. Certainly Friel uses this text, as Catherine Nash notes, to “question the notion of an organic and unchanging relationship between words and things, between

²³ “As in the case of Sarah's learning to speak,” Lojek identifies the catalyst for communication as “something outside of structure and language” (86). For Sarah Wheaton, the couple is able to “successfully decode one another through shared experience, imagination, and hope for the future” (241). For Lojek, the secret is “love” (86).

²⁴ According to Peter Zima, “it goes without saying that translation is also a form of repetition or iterability, since each translated word, sentence or idiom moves from one linguistic and cultural context into another. In this new context the signifiers of the original are replaced by new signifiers, which acquire new connotations, new meanings and new cultural values. Considering this shift in meaning that inevitably accompanies each translation process, [we must conclude] that translation is *aporetic*” (348).

language and place” (467). Thus, Hugh marshals the cause for learning English. He tells his students, most of whom he has schooled in the languages of Latin and Greek, that “We must learn those new names. We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home” (88). Hugh rallies this cry precisely because he recognizes—in Pine’s terms, “he *knows*” (227)—that if one views language as static and unchanging, then one denies “the possibility of a creative evolution of language and culture” (Nash 467). True to its form, *Translations* abounds with multiplicity, with absurdity and confusion. Like the process of translation itself, Friel uses this text to warn of that which transpires when “a civilization” becomes “imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of [...] fact” (52). In this warning, we see the unavoidable: that languages will predictably change—and that we must let them do so. “We must never cease renewing those images,” Hugh says, “because, once we do, we fossilize” (88).

The question, then, as Lim and Ansaldo see it, is how we respond to such shifts in language. The first option is to continue constructing myths of dispossession and oppression, lamenting the loss of language and culture; remember, Christopher Murray claims that “Friel looks back [at the Irish language situation in the mid-1980s] and finds the roots of it in 1833. What he finds he presents as tragic” (98). But to read the text in this way, Shaun Richards reminds us, is to fall into the type of emotional trap that Walter Benjamin rightfully criticizes; it is, Richards claims, to work “by means of empathy, a process through which the power of the imagination is linked to a paralysis of action”

(“Placed Identities” 57). Richards continues to summarize Benjamin’s position as

follows:

This excess of emotional identification with lost moments leads [...] to an all-pervading disempowering sadness, and he [Benjamin] quotes Flaubert, ‘Peu de gens devineront combien il a fallu être triste pour ressusciter Carthage [“Few will be able to guess how sad one had to be in order to resuscitate Carthage”] (“Placed Identities” 57; translation in original).

As an alternative, Lim and Ansaldo argue that we must begin to view the process of language acquisition and construction as one which grants a community of speakers the opportunity to “choose from their repertoire a linguistic resource appropriate for a given circumstance” (230, 234). In this way, multilingual communities are effectively defined in relation to the breadth of languages they speak, and their identities are viewed as multifaceted and pluralistic. What’s more, this approach allows the processes of language negotiation to be finally divorced from the troubling assumption that, culturally, something is inevitably forsaken—or betrayed—when a community of speakers chooses to embrace or acknowledge a language distanced from their native tongue.²⁵

Changing Times

As we have seen with Friel’s masterful drama, *Translations*, the Irish townland of Baile Beag is, indeed, home to a colonially displaced population living in a complex multilingual community. In the words of Lim and Ansaldo, this is a community whose “identity is defined by being multilingual” (233); Murray writes that, as “the play fades

²⁵ This is not to say, as understated as it may be, that there are not some very real and inevitable difficulties that come with such a change. That neither Hugh nor Manus—the former openly embracing the idea of teaching English at the national school, the latter seeking to maintain his Irish roots by teaching Gaelic at a hedge school on an outlying island—are successful in their endeavors suggests the inevitable difficulties of such fluidity.

out [...] we are left inhabiting two time scales simultaneously, sensed through two languages superimposed” (107). Friel engages in a wonderful play of multiplicity to show the ways in which the Irish characters exploit “the [linguistic] codes they have at hand, in order to align their identity according to changing times and environments” (Lim 233). It becomes clear that the Irish characters, long accustomed to multiple and conflicting place names, appreciate the volatility of language, and they understand, as Hugh explains in a final toast to Jimmy Jack, that “confusion is not an ignoble condition” (89). In the words of Richard Kearney, “The Irish mind does not reveal itself as a single, fixed, homogenous identity, and moves [...] free of the linear, centralizing logic of Greco-Roman culture [...]. It thereby creates, he says, not confusion but another kind of coherence” (qtd. in Holstein 9).

On a linguistic plane, perhaps one could usefully argue that this type of deconstructed coherence is finally embedded, for the Irish, in an awareness that such national, political, and linguistic issues—in a word, such *postcolonial* issues—are not restricted to Ireland. In this context, as Jochen Achilles argues, “the discussions of linguistic specificity and translatability in *Translations* become part of international exchanges about cultural pluralism and multiculturalism,” about the relationship between indigenous languages and English as the language of the colonizer (141). Thus, Owen’s willingness to work with the British as, what he calls, a “part-time, underpaid, civilian interpreter,” whose job is “to translate the quaint, archaic tongue” of the Irish into “the King’s good English,” resembles the theories on language posited by Chinua Achebe (30): “Is it right,” Achebe asks, “that a man should abandon his mother tongue for

someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it" (*African Writer* 64). Even Manus's maniacal insistence that Ireland remain only Irish-speaking hearkens to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's unrelenting stance that African literature must be written, above all, in the languages of Africa: "We African writers," Ngũgĩ admonishes, "are bound by our calling to do for our languages what Spencer, Milton and Shakespeare did for English; what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian" (29). African writers must use their tongue, he says, to depict Africa's "struggle to defeat imperialism" (29). Regardless of the approach, *Translations* reveals that while language remains a sensitive issue, it is, most of all, an always-changing semiotic resource that allows groups of individuals to come together. It allows individuals and groups of speakers to be empowered through their linguistic identities. It enables colonized nations to uphold cultural specificities while acknowledging global diversities. And in Friel's Ireland, such a freeplay of multiplicity definitely holds sway.

CHAPTER 4

“IT IS BETTER TO EAT WITH BOTH HANDS FOR A WHILE”:

KIPLING’S *KIM* AND THE LINGUABRIDITY OF A CHILD

According to linguist Eric Anchimbe, “the term *linguabridity*, formed from linguistics (language) and hybridity, is used [...] to refer to people (especially children) who grow up with two languages that belong to two, often competing or conflicting cultures” (“Linguabridity” 66). Anchimbe is clear in his assertion that “linguabridity affects especially children and not adults,” and he cites his own field research to discuss the ways in which adults “are involved in a drama of identity opportunism in which they adopt the features of the group they want to identify with or benefit from” (“Linguabridity” 67). On the contrary, “children grow up being unable to acutely identify with one group or another. They grow up with the ability to switch but are not actually switching—rather they are expressing the identity that is theirs, the one they grow up with” (Anchimbe, “Linguabridity” 67). Such a theory of hybridity offers a very viable solution to the imbalances and tensions most commonly outlined in mainstream postcolonial theory,²⁶ and, when applied to the literature of postcolonial regions, challenges many long-held assumptions about identity construction.

²⁶ Hybridity, one of the foremost terms in postcolonial theory, has varying definitions and meanings among scholars. For Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin, hybridity refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within contact zones produced by colonization” (*Key Concepts* 20). Gayatri

While Anchimbe situates his study in Cameroon, the title of his essay—“Linguabridity: Redefining Linguistic Identities among Children in Urban Areas”—clearly speaks to the breadth of the study’s applicability. Given that India is a country with over 900 million people and more than one thousand spoken languages, it works within the scope of Anchimbe’s article; it is also the focus of this chapter.

India is a country of different and contrasting cultures, and its linguistic chart is just as diverse. As with any *postcolonial multilingual space*, much of the complexity regarding language in India results from its long history of colonization. When the country gained its independence from Britain in 1947, the nation’s leaders (most notably Mahatma Gandhi) set about to establish a national language in order to facilitate regional communication and to help unify India as a nation state. Despite great planning, this initiative eventually failed, and, today, both Hindi and English are recognized as the country’s co-official languages. The politics between English and Hindi are played out in a variety of forms: English, for example, still carries great prestige and symbolizes advancement; it is the language of the media, the educational system, and the elite; Hindi, on the other hand, remains the language of the government as well as the dominant language in many rural areas, although the country’s other languages (such as Bengali, Urdu, and so on) have also had a substantial role in shaping the linguistic complexity in such areas.

Chakravorty Spivak cautions against utopian visions of hybridity which “remain oblivious to the obvious fact that enduring racial prejudices, cultural biases and social hierarchies continue to persist throughout much of the contemporary world, and have yet to be overcome” (qtd. in Heidemann 9). Homi Bhabha, however, maintains that hybridity offers up a viable way to conceptualize a genuinely international culture; for Bhabha, this idea is not “hybridist triumphalism,” as Spivak would charge, but rather “a third space of enunciation” where “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves” (*Postcolonial Studies Reader* 118, 209).

Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* is an adventure novel that shows a very clear awareness of India's linguistic contradictions. According to Graham Tulloch's "Voices of the Raj," Kipling employs several Indian dialects, such as "Urdu," (sometimes referred to as "Hindustanee" or "Hindi" in the text),²⁷ "Punjabi," "Tibetan," "Bengali," "Pashtun," and "some common speech of the mountains," in order to suggest the "total linguistic diversity of India"; he is also careful to differentiate between characters and individual speakers through stylistic devices and varieties of the languages they speak (35). David Stewart expands upon this notion to outline what he perceives to be the novel's stylistic inflections, which he locates in four distinct languages. Stewart conflates Kipling's style with the omniscient narrator, claiming that this first linguistic style is "encyclopedic, confiding, emphatic, and often elliptical" (105). The second language Stewart identifies is that used by Colonel Creighton, the Reverend Bennett, and Father Victor, and he calls this "the voice of the homeland" (106). Here, each person "speaks his own dialect of English," and, in such a way, Kipling is able to distinguish one character's "Irish" from another's English. *Kim*'s third language is the "actual Urdu, often spoken with an accent," that Kipling is able to translate onto the printed page as something that looks non-English (107). And finally, Kim's "tinny saw-cut English," or "native English" is the fourth type of language in the novel, and both Stewart and Tulloch correctly assign this tongue to Hurree Babu as well (Stewart 106).

²⁷ Kipling does not distinguish between the Hindi and Urdu dialects, as, of course, we are accustomed to doing today. In contemporary India, language issues remain contested, charged, and controversial. While there are great similarities between Hindi and Urdu, they remain very distinct and different dialects. Urdu, unlike Hindi, is not recognized by the Indian government as an "official language"; Urdu is also a Muslim-based Persian dialect with many longstanding religious and political affiliations.

As this chapter will show, Kipling is able to use this linguistic variety to display the ways in which the culturally and linguistically hybrid child actually confirms Anchimbe's suspicion, existing in what Homi Bhabha calls the "third space of enunciation," where he is able to "elude the politics of polarity" and emerge as a multicultural vision of himself (*Postcolonial Studies Reader* 209).

Kipling's play with duality is obvious from the novel's opening lines, which reveal to readers that Kim, Kipling's child protagonist, is "English,"

though he was burned black as any native; though
he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his
mother-tongue in clipped uncertain sing-song;
though he consorted on terms of perfect equality
with the small boys of the bazaar; Kim was white—
a poor white of the very poorest (49).

What we see in the triple repetition of the word "though," is that Kipling's initial presentation of Kim borders on vague ambivalence. By failing to define the young boy's identity, Kipling makes clear that the boy's identity is not clearly definable. Throughout the novel, Kim will become known as the "Little Friend of All the World," a vagabond child of the streets of Lahore, "burned black as any native" (49). But Kim is also Kimball O'Hara, orphan of a Color-Sergeant in the Mavericks regiment. He belongs to three worlds: the Oriental, the British, and the Indian—all while remaining "racially" Irish.

Indeed, Kipling's characterization of Kim as Irish is, for postcolonial readers, one of the most challenging aspects of his identity; for, while Kipling clearly desires to emphasize Kim's Irishness, it is not fully clear in what ways—if at all—Kipling distinguishes between Irishness and Englishness in the text. Kipling's failure to adequately distinguish between these opposing aspects of Kim's identity (as an Irish

citizen, he can very much relate to the struggles of both the colonizer and the colonized) is notable if we consider: (1) the constant violent conflicts between the Irish and the English during Kipling's lifetime, and (2) the fact that the British thought of the Irish as racially different. As L. Perry Curtis reminds us, in the 1800s, the Irish (whether in Ireland, Britain, or the United States) were very often negatively stereotyped. In many cases, the same negative characteristics attributed to Indians (sloth, immorality, destructiveness, inhumanity) were often also associated with the Irish. According to Curtis, because the British thought of the Irish as racially different, Irish nationals were often deemed to be more closely related to apes than to other Europeans; they were seen as more black than white, or in Bhabha's terms, "not white/not quite" (*Mimicry* 132). With this context, then, we should keep in mind that Kim's Irishness renders him already racially ambiguous, already "brown."

As many scholars have noted,²⁸ it is easy to draw parallels between Kim's hybrid character and Kipling's own childhood experiences in India: Kipling, after all, was born in Bombay²⁹ to English parents who considered themselves Anglo-Indians. Despite the fact that Kipling returned to England at the age of six, throughout his life he, too, considered himself an Anglo-Indian. Speaking of the complex identity and language issues that punctuated much of his home life (if not all of his youth), Kipling writes in *Something of Myself*: "In the afternoon heats before we took our sleep, she [the Portuguese *avah* or nanny] or Meeta [the Hindu *bearer*, or male attendant] would tell us

²⁸ I am thinking specifically of Zohreh Sullivan's *Narratives of Empire: The Fictions of Rudyard Kipling* and Sara Suleri's "The Adolescence of Kim."

²⁹ Of Bombay, Kipling writes: "Mother of Cities to me,/ For I was born in her gate,/ Between the palms and the sea,/ Where the world-end steamers wait" (*Seven Seas* v.).

stories and Indian nursery songs all unforgotten, and we were sent into the dining-room after we had been dressed, with the caution ‘Speak English now to Papa and Mamma.’ So one spoke ‘English,’ haltingly translated out of the vernacular idiom that one thought and dreamed in” (4-5).

The gentle chide that we see in this passage—“Speak English now to Papa and Mamma”—is of crucial importance to Kipling’s account of his childhood, as it demonstrates Anchimbe’s point precisely. As stated above, Anchimbe maintains that linguabrid children grow up with the ability to express themselves in a variety of languages, without the awareness that they must choose, or align themselves, with a particular tongue at a particular moment. In his companion study, “Hybrid Linguistic Identities,” Anchimbe goes on to discuss what he calls “identity opportunism”—a phenomenon seen only in adult speakers—wherein speakers spontaneously change, fluctuate, or adapt their speech patterns “each time they use one language or another for specific reasons” (249). Identity opportunism:

covers those strategies that make the use of one language more acceptable than another; that give a sense of attachment or status quo to a given language and its identity; that make one feel at home and linguistically secure, at least for the moment, in given contexts and situations; and that provide linguistically solid foundations for the exclusion of out-group and non-group members (249).

In this context, Kipling’s childhood account reveals an adult voice of authority trying to impose the adult reality of identity opportunism—and its accompanying features of acceptance, attachment, security, and inclusion—on the freedom and linguabridity of the culturally hybrid child. What I hope to show in this chapter are the ways in which

Kipling allows his child protagonist, Kim, the type of linguistic flexibility Kipling himself experienced as a child. By extension, I will show that what emerges from this is a fluidity of identity that we do not see in any of the novel's other characters. Which is to say, throughout this chapter, Kim will emerge as a true hybrid—indeed, a true linguabrid—who, much like the child Kipling mentioned above, fails to recognize the need for identity alignment. I will show that Kim exists within Bhabha's "third space of enunciation" (in that he is able to elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the "other of himself") while certain characters around him—namely Hurree Babu and Teshoo Lama—struggle with allegiance and opportunism, ultimately selling themselves out to the varied racial and linguistic climate of colonial India.

The fact that both Kim and Hurree Babu speak such a "richly developed variety of English speech in the novel" is quite telling, particularly if we consider the similarities and differences in their language use (Tulloch 38). Speaking of Hurree, Tulloch contends that he "has a command of a variety of English which belongs to the group of Indian varieties of English" (38). The conflation here between "Indian" and "English" points to a linguistic clash that plays itself out quite frequently in Hurree's dialogue. As a linguistically hybrid character, Kipling offers Hurree the opportunity to speak both his own vernacular as well as the "Indian variety of English" mentioned above. When Hurree speaks his own vernacular, his language is clear and articulate; when he speaks his own variety of Indian English, the effect, as Tulloch notes, is often comedic to readers and speakers of British Standard English, as he continually mixes idioms and lacks a sense of proper diction. The effect of Hurree's linguistic inauthenticity speaks to

Bhabha's "inappropriate" mimicry, which demonstrates how colonial subjects are able to disrupt the mechanics of Empire from within (readers will remember that Hurree speaks in a form of ironized English that makes the English comfortable, and the comedic effect that comes from such inauthenticity tends to mitigate the threat of his own hybridity), while also confirming what Macaulay writes about in his 1835 "Minute on Education": that colonial success depends on the formation of "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (130). Both Kumar and Cambridge become—like Macaulay's Indian interpreters or Naipaul's mimic men—"inappropriate" colonial subjects who, in Bhabha's words, "cohere the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensify surveillances, and pose an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" ("Mimicry" 126). "Mimicry," as a force capable of destabilizing the colonial subjectivity and unsettling its authoritative centrality, is thus, as Bhabha tells us, at once "resemblance and menace" ("Mimicry" 127).

Hurree's narrative technique reveals two distinct ways that Hurree serves the text as a linguistically hybrid character. The first reading I will consider is that Hurree is a hybrid character working to establish his own cultural identity in the face of what Anchimbe would call a *postcolonial multilingual space*. Indeed, on his own ground, Hurree is culturally secure and the language used to represent his own vernacular reflects this. However, whenever Hurree is characterized as a representative of the Imperial Game, he confronts a different culture in which, as an English-educated Bengali, he remains somewhat of an outsider. In these moments, he must speak English rather than

the vernacular, and we see the comedic undertones of his language arise when he makes the conscious decision to speak English over his native tongue.

Tulloch's study carefully outlines the three rhetorical structures at work in the presentation of Hurree's language (incorrect idioms, awkward expletives, and inappropriate diction), and these three devices lead him to claim that "Kipling presents Hurree's language in comic terms" (39). I take the time to quote from one of Tulloch's extended passages in order to establish a framework that will speak to my own contentions regarding Hurree's identity opportunism. Tulloch writes:

One source of comedy lies in Hurree's attempts to speak idiomatically since he frequently gets the idiom wrong, as in "you were pulling my legs"; "I hope you—ah—will come out on top-side all raight' 'upon the instantaneous spur of the moment"; "A lots more than you would suppose"; "that is my strong points"; "I will kindly shut the door" and "You have...swiped the whole bag of tricks—locks, stocks, and barrels." Similarly his attempts at English swearing never quite come off as with "order him to be jolly dam-quick"; "you take the bally bun". Finally, his sense of appropriate diction does not always agree with British usage, particularly in his use of formal language. To some extent, as he tells Kim, his English is learnt from books and this leads to the use of poeticisms in contexts where they would not be used by British writers: "I go from here straight into the Doon. It is verree verdant and painted meads" (39-40).

Hurree's use of English manifests itself most frequently when he is trying to use reason and scientific fact to overcome Indian superstition and magic; if he is speaking of a local superstition to which he personally ascribes, he describes the scene in the vernacular.

Consider, for example, that during his encounter with Huneefa the witch, the contradictions in his speech show the clash between his upbringing and his English education. Even though he uses his Indian English to claim that witchcraft is nothing but "ventriloquy" (230), his cultural superstitions come into play, as he is "careful not to step

in Huneefa's blotched, squat shadow on the boards" because "witches—when their time is on them—can lay hold of the heels of a man's soul if he does that" (230). As the scene continues, Hurree begins to speak Indian English—long associated with rationality and reason—to overcome his fright: "How am I to fear the absolutely non-existent?" said Hurree Babu, *talking English to reassure himself*. 'It is an awful thing still to dread the magic that you contemptuously investigate—to collect folk-lore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in all powers of Darkness'" (228; emphasis added).

The difference between Hurree's two languages is meant, in this scene, to be obvious to the reader—so much so that Kipling draws attention to the Babu's change of language through the narrator's intrusive commentary, which intervenes to remind readers that Hurree began "talking English to reassure himself" (228). We see this again, lines later, when the narrator intrudes with the stage-like direction, "In English":

'No. She has charmed thee against all devils and all dangers—in the name of her devils. It was Mahbub's desire.' In English: 'He is highly obsolete, I think, to indulge in such superstition. Why, it is all ventriloquy. Belly-speak—eh?' (230).

When Hurree talks about his employment with the British Secret Service in English, he seems unable to take the Great Game seriously in that medium. Kim therefore urges him to "Talk Hindi and let us get to the yolk of the egg" (269). What we see here is that while Hurree may talk to Kim, at least on one level, as if he were an English gentleman, his accent and appearance constantly remind Kim that he, the Babu, is not one of "them": "How comes it that this man is one of us?" Kim asks (209).

The second interpretation to consider when it comes to Hurree's linguabridity—and the one that seems most compelling to me—is that Hurree, as an English-educated

Bengali and one of the foremost players in the Great Game, is a hybrid character enacting Anchimbe's process of identity alignment through the medium of performative speech. There is little doubt that Hurree adopts the features of the group he wants to identify with and benefit from. In this way, I suggest that Kipling means for us to read him as a character involved in the drama of "identity opportunism." Here we must question, as Tulloch rightfully does, whether Hurree is playing a role in using his "clumsy English"; remember, when Kim suggests that they should not be heard speaking English, Hurree replies: "that is all raight. I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk English to show off" (231). In the words of Don Randall, readers must recognize that "Hurree is a potentially unsettling individual" (97):

He is a very slippery character—or rather "oily," to use Kipling's own often-repeated adjective. The surface, the boundary, of his person is slick, elusive, ungraspable. He is a luminal body, a luminal selfhood: here Hurree melts into a crowd; elsewhere he stows about his body the various elements of a large intelligence trove, then transforms his entire aspect and demeanor, his very identity, while passing through a doorway (98).

Moreover, Hurree is quick-witted and resourceful, and, as Tulloch notes, "his extraordinary transformations, which can fool even Kim, leave us unsure who he really is" (43). Readers will recall that Hurree is able to use his speech acts and language capabilities to transform himself into an opponent of British rule—one with "a most complete hatred of his conquerors"—in order to ingratiate himself with the French and Russian agents. The narrator tells us that:

He became thickly treasonous, and spoke in terms of sweeping indecency of a Government which had forced on him a white man's education and neglected to supply him with a white man's salary. He babbled talks of oppression and wrong until the tears ran down his cheeks for the miseries of the land (286).

Hurree's performative speech in this scene is striking in that it not only distorts the truth, but it also reveals his awareness and capacity for manipulating his subject position as a colonial agent.

Once the scene explodes with confusion—the Russians attempt to buy (and then later steal) the Lama's Wheel of Life, arousing anger in Kim and fear in the people of the hills—Hurree begins to recognize the overwhelming power of the hybrid. As such, he begins to contemplate where his allegiance should lie: “the outrage was accidental, but onlee me could have worked it—oh—for all it was dam'—well worth. Consider the moral effect upon these ignorant peoples! No treaties—no papers—no written documents at all—and *me* to interpret for them. How I shall laugh with the Colonel! I wish I had their papers also: but you cannot occupy two places in space simultaneously. Thatt is axiomatic” (299). Peii Su, in her remarks upon this scene, notes that “What's unpleasant about Hurree is that with an awareness of power in his agent position, he chooses to give into the colonial state and attains promotion in the British system” (24). Which is to say, as a culturally and linguistically hybrid being, Hurree is very much aware of the ways in which he can manipulate his own being, his own language, for a specific purpose; in this scene, that purpose is to achieve the prestige and notoriety for which he is looking. As has been noted, when the Babu is with Kim, he transitions between speaking perfect vernacular and respectful English; with the Russians and the Frenchmen, his performative speech borders on heresy for one committed to serving the Crown; and with Colonel Creighton, his Indian English belies the fact that he is anything other than an English-

educated Bengali hoping to further ingratiate himself in order to rise up the ranks of command.

Certainly Hurree Babu is not the only character in the book who uses his knowledge and subject position to engage in such acts of identity opportunism, however. While most critics consider Teshoo Lama a character far removed from the antics that underlie the Great Game, it seems to me that, in his own way, the lama clearly understands the sly shifts in character that punctuate acts of identity opportunism and promote self-advancement.³⁰

To be sure, the lama is a character who, upon first reading, appears to be entirely vulnerable (“all earth would have picked thy bones within ten miles of Lahore city if I had not guarded thee,” Kim tells the Lama [109]), and, in his position of need, he comes across as quite *nonopportunistic*. The lama appears like an innocent child—dependent on Kim for food, shelter, and travel—throughout much of the book, most particularly at the train station when the attendant swindles him into receiving a ticket for a location that would not allow him to complete his journey. Kim recognizes the mistake and impatiently chides the attendant for desiring to deceive one as holy as Teshoo Lama. Yet I would maintain that, despite this supposed vulnerability, an analysis of the lama’s

³⁰ As this discussion moves on to demonstrate the various modes of opportunism in the text, I must acknowledge the complexity inherent in the argument I am about to make. While Anchimbe’s study focuses primarily on the linguistic modes of identity opportunism in adult hybrids, he also dedicates much of his research to understanding the various other factors that influence identity formation. He ultimately concludes that any discussion of cultural hybridity or linguabridity must also account for the ways in which these outside “cultural elements” influence an individual’s sense of identity. As such, while aspects of the following discussion are not rooted directly in language use and acquisition, the way that the characters adapt to their environments—and the way that they use their knowledge of culture and custom to gain admission into a larger collective identity—obviously speaks to the issues of identity opportunism Anchimbe discusses.

language (including his incessant repetition of religious phrases) reveals a surprising self-awareness concerning his desire to separate from the Wheel of Life.

To begin this discussion, I again turn to Tulloch's useful analysis of the novel's language—this time in relation to the lama. Tulloch writes:

His [the lama's] language is characterized by certain religious phrases, like "followers of the Excellent One", "It is all illusion. *Ay, maya*, illusion", "I acquire merit" and "Just is the Wheel". The religious tone is enhanced by the especially high frequency of archaisms in his speech. Particularly notable is a usage with *even* which is highly characteristic of the Authorised Version of the Bible [...]. He also uses an allegorical style foreign to modern British English [...] and handles similes with full confidence (37).

Given the lama's excessive use of what Tulloch calls "religious phrases," it is most helpful for readers to go beyond merely outlining the rhetorical structures at work in the Lama's dialogue in favor of analyzing precisely *how* some of these phrases work when juxtaposed with his other thoughts and ideologies.

Although Vasant A. Shahane claims that "the lama is attached to the Mahayana rather than the Hinayana system of beliefs about salvation, the former placing primacy on the self, and the latter on helping kindred souls as well as self in seeking deliverance," it seems to me that the lama places most of his emphasis in the belief that he will achieve deliverance by helping wayward souls (qtd. in Adam 68). Through this interpretation, then, the Lama would appear to adhere more to the Hinyana system of belief and not, as Shahane argues, to the Mayayana. Locating the lama's beliefs in the Hinyana system—which, to reiterate, maintains that one must help another soul to salvation before deliverance for the self is possible—is an important distinction for this discussion, as it clearly help readers understand the lama's manic repetition of religious phrases, such as

“I acquire merit.” It is in this characteristic, it seems to me, that Kipling reveals the motivation behind much of the lama’s actions.

The lama’s continual emphasis on merit reveals itself in a number of places throughout the novel. The first time the lama speaks such a religious phrase comes after Mr. Bennett and Father Victor intercept Kim, whom they find hiding out in their Imperial camp searching for more information regarding the Red Bull in a green field that comes from his father’s prophecy. Kim, as we know, is intent on only remaining with the Imperial officers “for a night or two,” and he mentions a version of this—“the day after tomorrow I return”—several times throughout his exchanges with the lama (139, 141). Initially, the lama is overcome with grief and sorrow at the prospect of losing his young *chela*—a boy most adept at helping him on his quest for the River of the Arrow—to Father Victor and the Church of England: “But tell them that thou art my *chela*,” the lama implores (137). “Tell them how thou didst come to me when I was faint and bewildered. Tell them of our Search, and they will surely let thee go now” (137). The lama’s tone solemnly changes within the space of a few pages, however, when he begins to contemplate his position as “a Follower of the Way” (140). The lama concludes that Kim is being taken from him, as a “punishment,” for growing too fond and too attached to the young boy: “I stepped aside from the Way, my *chela* [...]. Now I am sorrowful because thou art taken away and my River is far from me. It is the Law which I have broken!” (141).

On a first reading, it does seem as though the lama—reminded of his beliefs and determined to complete his quest—is willing to let Kim go in order that he may do as the

Stars suggest and find the River alone. Yet, the conversation takes an interesting turn as the lama—who has just “waved a hand to show that the matter was finally settled in his mind” (141)—begins to question what the Royal officers will do with Kim. The lama, as a follower of what Shahane describes as a Hinayana system of beliefs—wherein helping kindred souls to salvation is a way to find personal deliverance—again begins to contemplate his relation to Kim, and his thoughts, at this point, take an interesting turn. It is most telling that the narrator intrudes to tell readers that the lama’s “tone altered as he turned to Kim” and asked: “what will they do with thee? At least I may, *acquiring merit*, wipe out past ill” (141; emphasis added). This is the first time in the text that the lama has employed this precise religious phrase, and it seems quite telling that he thinks of Kim’s fate only after considering how he may (1) repent for his deviation from the Way and (2) acquire merit—and subsequently salvation—as the benefactor of Kim’s education: “To help the ignorant to wisdom is always a merit,” the lama tells the now highly disconcerted Kim (142).

From this point forward, whenever the lama meets Kim (either outside the gates of St. Xavier’s or when Kim finally rejoins him on the quest for the River of the Arrow), the merit that he has—or will—acquire is never forgotten in his mind. The first time he meets Kim after their long absence, he tells him that he has momentarily abandoned his search because “there is a debate in the Temple of the Tirthankars on this matter [of the precise location of the River of the Arrow]”; this brief hiatus does not matter to the lama, however, because, as he tells Kim, “I acquire merit in that I help thee, my *chela*, to wisdom” (169). Lines later, he repeats the same sentiment: “It is manifest that from time

to time I shall acquire merit [...] by assuring myself that thy feet are set on wisdom” (170).

In Chapter Nine, once Kim has been “removed” from the records of St. Xavier’s and, as we will later discover, dispatched to the road with the lama, the narrator again reveals the motivation behind the lama’s charitable act. Recalling the lama’s time at the Temple of the Tirthankars in Benares, the narrator tells us that:

He had followed the traces of the Blessed Feet throughout all India. [...]. There remained nothing more in life but to find the River of the Arrow. Yet it was shown to him in dreams that it was a matter not to be undertaken with any hope of success unless that seeker had with him the one *chela* appointed to bring the event to a happy issue, and versed in great wisdom—such wisdom as white-haired Keepers of Images possess (213).

The lama reiterates versions of this dream—wherein he learns that, in order for his quest to be successful, he must have an educated *chela* at his side—several times throughout the novel; most notably, he tells Kim of a conversation he had with Hurree Babu, wherein “I told him of my dream, and of the manner by which I had acquired merit by causing thee to be taught in wisdom” (277). What we can take from the continual repetition of this dream is that fact that the lama, above all a servant of the Way, is always aware of the need for Kim to complete his schooling so that, in turn, the lama may complete his quest. Such a manifestation comes to him even while he is sleeping, and the connection between Kim’s education and the lama’s quest is so strong that, at least in the lama’s linguistic repertoire, one is hardly mentioned without reference to its dependence on the other.

The point here is that while the lama may appear to be the novel's one transcendental figure—and a character entirely removed from the opportunistic antics of the Great Game—he is, on the contrary, absolutely motivated by the personal reward, the salvation and deliverance, he will achieve once young Kim has been properly educated and remitted again into his service. This type of reading is only revealed by analyzing the juxtaposition of language in the lama's speech patterns; for it is in the space of language—between the lama's actions (I will pay for Kim's schooling) and his desires (I will acquire merit)—that his true motivation is revealed. In this way, the lama emerges as an opportunistic character whose interest in Kim mirrors his own desire to take from the child that which he needs to find his River and disengage from the Wheel of Life.

In his article, “On Cannibalists and Sociolinguists,” Roy Bendor successfully demonstrates the relationship between opportunism and cultural cannibalism, noting:

The cannibal's ability to digest his enemies and absorb their power while remaining distinctly autonomous served as a potent allegory to what Cannibalists sought to accomplish: absorb European contemporary culture while remaining distinctive [...]; resist European cultural imperialism while maintaining the ability to borrow from its ideas, motifs and styles (265).

While it may seem a stretch to designate Teshoo Lama as a “cultural cannibal,” I do think Bendor offers a viable framework through which to characterize the lama and his merit-based activities. As readers, we are aware of the great physical strain the Search has had on Kim: “It was never more than a couple of miles a day now, and Kim's shoulders bore all the weight of it—the burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food-bag with the locked books, the load of the writings on his heart, and the details of the daily routine” (319):

He begged in the dawn, set blankets for the lama's meditation, held the weary head on his lap through the noonday heats, fanning away the flies till his wrists ached, begged again in the evenings, and rubbed the lama's feet, who rewarded him with the promise of Freedom—today, tomorrow, or, at furthest, the next day. [...] Overborne by strain, fatigue, and the weight beyond his years, Kim broke down and sobbed at the lama's feet (319-320).

During Kim's episode of hunger and fatigue, the lama recognizes that such suffering has come about from his own act of neglecting and forgetting the needs of the Body. The lama is very much aware that this oversight has led to Kim's mental and physical fatigue: "Child, I have lived on thy strength as an old tree lives on the lime of a new wall. Day by day, since Shamlegh down, I have stolen strength from thee" (321). The lama even tells the Sahiba that he has "lived upon his [Kim's] strength—eating him" (322). Moreover, just as the lama is adept at draining from Kim the strength he needs to complete his quest, he also drains from the land the strength he needs to separate himself from the Wheel of Life. We are told many times, as Kim and Teshoo Lama scale "the rampart of the Himalayas," that the lama is "ten times the stronger man in this good air," and that "day after day [as] they struck deeper into the huddled mountains [...] Kim watched the lama return to a man's strength" (319, 279).

Such a reversal—indeed, a revival—hearkens to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, wherein Dracula, upon sucking the blood of his unsuspecting victims, actually regresses in age and gains strength and viability beyond his years. When Jonathan Harker first discovers that he is being held prisoner in Dracula's castle, he remarks on the Count's behavior, noting that "he grew excited as he spoke, and walked about the room pulling his great white moustache and grasping anything on which he laid his hands" (35). Yet, once

Dracula begins to satiate his lust for blood, Mina Harker characterizes the Count as “a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard” (183).

Obviously the changes in the Count’s description—from a man with a great white moustache” to one with a “black moustache”—speaks to a type of reverse aging, the likes of which, as I have argued, parallel Teshoo Lama’s return to strength in the above scene. Indeed, the changes taking place spring from forms of cannibalistic “ingestion.”

We must also consider, as a parallel, the ways in which Stoker’s Dracula invites Jonathan Harker to Transylvania in order to glean from him as much information as he can about England. Dracula desires that Harker teach him English, so that he might improve his language skills and better blend when he arrives upon England’s shores. He convinces Harker to give up useful information concerning business transactions in England as well as the method for shipping goods between Transylvania and Carfax, so that he may effectively transport himself onto the continent. The examples here could go on, but the point is that by bringing Harker into his command, Dracula not only desires to suck Harker’s blood and, thus, extend his own life; he also wants to gain as much information as possible so that he can, in effect, colonize England, the great colonizer. As a comparison, Teshoo Lama—who does not really ingest the European culture himself, the way Dracula does— certainly manipulates European culture for his own ends: he convinces Kim that God has sent him as a *chela* to aid in the search for the River; he pays for Kim’s education, prompted, in effect, by a dream that tells him that his *chela* must be formally educated; and he does this knowing all the while that if he can

only endure to the point of saving Kim's orphaned soul, his own deliverance will surely be at hand.

What makes the application of cannibalism pertinent to this discussion³¹ is the fact that the lama's desire to draw strength and information from his *chela* (or, to use Bendor's language, his "act of incorporation") speaks directly to his desire to acquire merit (276). According to Bendor:

By initiating the cannibalistic act of incorporation and by potentially influencing the conditions in which the act of incorporation takes place, the cannibal holds symbolic power over the incorporated object, the act of the incorporation overcomes. From this perspective, the *intentionality* of cannibalistic incorporation is what enables [the unleashing of] new modes of [...] agency [and] empowerment (276).

According to this reading, then, the lama—as a cannibal-like character who gains potency through his *chela*'s diminished strength—has a symbolic influence over Kim, and it is precisely this subject position that allows for his own type of empowerment to emerge. As a result, he can claim that he has "won salvation for himself and his beloved" without pausing to consider that never once has Kim displayed an interest in being separated from the World of Illusion (338).

Characteristics such as this make Kim a character entirely different from both Hurree Babu and Teshoo Lama. Aside from the obvious differences in age and upbringing, Kim is a linguabrid character full of joy and jest. In order to demonstrate Kim's linguabridity, Kipling allows him to speak his native vernacular, which often takes the

³¹ Bendor's theory of cultural cannibalism proves most useful here, in that it gets readers into this discussion. There are, however, very real limitations to this reading, and Teshoo Lama's "eating" of Kim is actually closer to Dracula's vampirism than to, say, the cultural cannibalism that we see in Chapter Five's discussion of *Cambridge*, which provides a direct application of the types of incorporation Bendor discusses.

form of abusive or colorful language, as well as English, which he speaks in a “clipped uncertain sing-song” (49). According to Tulloch, “Kim, the embodiment of all India’s cultures, can adopt the language of all religious groups” (38); as the novel opens, Kim thinks in Urdu and he dreams, apparently, in both English and Hindustani.³² “For him,” Tulloch tells us, “a better knowledge of English comes with an education which is intended to fit him for the Great Game. It is therefore not surprising that when he comes to join in the Game he thinks in English about how he should act” (42).

Much like Hurree Babu and Teshoo Lama, Kim’s linguistic choices also necessarily relate to his sense of identity. Certainly Kim’s self-consciousness about his identity is a common refrain in the work (“I am Kim. This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?” [166]), and this helps to speak to his oscillations between sahibism and nativism. As Ian Adam writes, Kim’s “uncertainties are frequently emblemized through the different languages modes. The discovery of his European origins encapsulates this: the leather amulet-case hanging around Kim’s neck is for him an Indian charm with occult power, but its contents, three written documents made up of two from the Masonic lodge and Kim’s birth certificate, are for Father Victor and the others the evidence and legitimation of a British identity” (70).

Despite the difficulties in properly characterizing—or, should I say, categorizing—this young Irish/English/Indian boy, at least one of Kipling’s characters, Mahbub Ali, most consistently and comfortably uses notions of honesty and truth to speak of Kim’s character. The narrator tells us that “Kim was the one soul in the world

³² Before the British Partition in 1947, Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani were virtually synonymous, and since there was no clear distinction in popular usage at the time (though there is today), Kipling does not draw a clear distinction between them.

who had never told him [Mahbub Ali] a lie” (71); Hurree Babu, once Kim is deeply enthralled in the trenches of the Great Game and far removed from any communication with his superiors, resolutely proclaims that all would be well, for, indeed, Kim “could be trusted” (299).

Such references to Kim’s truth of character—which I believe parallel his truth of identity or his *authentic* hybridity—are very important in a text, such as *Kim*, where a duplicity of identity seems to be embodied in nearly every character we encounter: Mahbub Ali is 251B and Hurree Babu R18; the Mahratta is E23 and Strickland Sahib remains unnumbered, though his charlatan-like transformations are certainly worthy of consideration. In these characters, their pattern of conscious and opportunistic fluctuation between identities and languages is very different from what we see in the child hybrid, Kim. It is, above all, Kim’s ability to fluctuate between multiple languages and identities—not in an opportunistic way, but rather because he is literally a character whose identity is a fusion of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds he has inherited from his Irish father, his time on the roads of rural India, and his submergence in the British educational system—that resonates, at least with Mahbub Ali, as authentic truth.

Consider the following exchange between Mahbub Ali and the child Kim:

‘Friend of all the World,’ said Mahbub, pushing over the pipe for the boy to clean, ‘I have met many men, women, and boys, and not a few Sahibs. I have never in all my days met such an imp³³ as thou art.’

‘And why? When I always tell thee the truth’ (192).

³³ Mahbub Ali’s characterization of Kim as “an imp” throughout the novel is most telling, in that it reveals, in the words of Peii Su, that “even the pragmatic horse dealer cannot credit Kim with an assured identity” (37).

Mahbub's musings in this scene reveal that Kim is truly an enigma to many of the characters throughout the novel (most of whom are schooled in espionage and spy games) in that they are simply unable to read or interpret the behavior of this young boy whose identity is grounded in a type of nonopportunistic hybridity. Remember that Colonel Creighton is mystified when Kim disappears from St. Xavier's because he "yearned" for the road: "this is a great insolence on his part," Creighton tells Mahbub Ali (173, 177). And Lurgan Sahib, who houses Kim to test his memory and oversee his training, cannot make sense of the fact that his hypnotic tricks do not work on Kim: "You are the first who has ever saved himself. I wish I knew what it was that...but you are right. You should not tell that—not even to me (203).

To clarify, Kim does have moments in the text where, like the other characters mentioned, he appears to use his knowledge of language and culture in order to influence his subject position. Hence, one could argue, he is both opportunistic and manipulative. Yet a closer analysis of such episodes reveals two different ways that Kipling actually deflects Kim's attempt in this regard.

The first tactic Kipling uses to differentiate Kim from the other players of the Great Game is, as has been discussed, his association with truth and trust. Perhaps the best example of this type of characterization is seen at the one moment in the text when Kim could gain the most (freedom on the road and the return to his beloved lama) from being opportunistic. When the Reverend Arthur Bennett discovers Kim hiding outside the mess-tent door (Kim, again, is searching for more information regarding his father's

prophecy of a red-gold bull upon a field of Irish green), he begins to interrogate Kim as to his motives for lying low:

‘What were you doing? You’re a thief. *Choor? Mallum?* His Hindustani was very limited, and the ruffled and disgusted Kim intended to keep to the character laid down for him. As he recovered his breath he was inventing a beautifully plausible tale of his relations to some scullion, and at the same time keeping a keen eye on and a little under the Chaplain’s left arm-pit (132).

And yet, Kim refrains from speaking any type of absurdity. In proper English, he chooses fact over fiction and begins to exclaim, “I did *not* thieve. [...] You have hit me kicks all over my body. Now give me my charm and I will go away” (133). It is in this scuffle that the print documents around Kim’s neck—the very emblems of his hybrid identity—are revealed, and Kim begins to speak of the ways that he is, at once, “Kim,” “Kimball,” and “Kim Rishti ke” (134).

Later in the scene, Kim is again overwhelmed by his desire to use his knowledge of the English language in order to manipulate the Royal officers. The Regiment has kindly given him a glass of sherry and has asked him to reveal the extraordinary events of his childhood:

Kim coughed a little as he put down the empty glass, and considered. This seemed a time for caution and fancy. Small boys who prowl about camps are generally turned out after a whipping. But he had received no stripes; the amulet was evidently working in his favour, and it looked as though the Umballa horoscope and the few words that he could remember of his father’s maunderings fitted in most miraculously (134).

‘My father, he is dead in Lahore city since I was very little,’ Kim exclaims, truthfully delving into his childhood experiences (134). It is here that Bennett abruptly interrupts Kim’s dialogue with the accusation that he is, “A phenomenal little liar” (135).

Such an example, wherein Kim chooses to reveal the truth of his identity—despite the dramatic consequences of being forced to leave his position as *chela* that he might enroll at St. Xavier’s—shows precisely how Kim’s hybridity actually becomes the motivating force behind his decision. When he is initially questioned by the Chaplain, he turns to the papers around his neck and, as I have noted, affirms the multiplicity of his character: “Kim,” “Kimball,” “Kim riskti ke” (134). When Father Victor gives him a glass and asks for his tale, Kim turns to at least two parts of his hybrid identity—both his father’s papers and the Umballa horoscope, indicative, of course, of India’s mysticism—in order to encourage himself onward toward revealing the truth he has experienced. Once he speaks, he talks openly of his father, his mother, the Indian prophecy, and his role as the disciple of Teshoo Lama. It thus seems that, once confronted with the reminder of his white identity—represented, in this case, by the British Royal Officers—Kim does precisely what Anchimbe’s study would expect of a perfect-*linguabrid*: he finds it impossible to choose one official identity with which to represent himself, because, as his musings show, by either birth or custom, “he straddles each of these identities” interchangeably and intuitively (“Linguabridity” 78).

The second strategy Kipling uses to distance Kim from any appearance of identity opportunism is the fact that, even when Kim is using tactics of manipulation, he never forgets that he is playing, above all, a *game*. Which is to say, Kipling imbues Kim with a self-awareness that the other characters seem to be lacking, and, such awareness comes from his ability—as the text’s only fully developed child character—to imagine, to pretend, to play. When Colonel Creighton begins to test Kim to decipher whether he is

trustworthy, as Mahbub claims, Kim lies. The Colonel asks Kim to bring his cherrot-case to his house one evening, and—with a “quick wit” that “told him he was being tested in some fashion or another” (164)—Kim recognizes that it would not behoove him to reveal that he already has a knowledge of where the Colonel resides: “Where is the house?” Kim said. “Ask anyone in the big bazaar,” the Colonel responds (164). As the Colonel walks out of the scene, Kim “rejoiced that he had not betrayed his knowledge of the Colonel’s house; and when, on his return to barracks, he discovered that no cheroot-case had been left behind, he beamed with delight. Here was a man after his own heart—a torturous and indirect person *playing a hidden game*. Well, if he could be a fool, so could Kim” (165; emphasis added). Thus, aware that he is “playing,” Kim “showed nothing of his mind”; “he betrayed no emotion [...] but awaited the *play of circumstances* with an interested soul” (165; emphasis added).

When the season for holiday comes to St. Xavier’s, and Kim seeks refuge on the road for three months, he asks a *Naikan*, a dancing girl, to help him dye his skin black that he may more appropriately—and, perhaps, anonymously—roam the roads of rural India: “A little dyestuff and three yards of cloth to help out a jest,” Kim requests of the illicit woman (174). While this scene appears to be the epitome of identity opportunism—Kim is, in fact, literally transforming his skin color in order to make himself feel more secure among his fellow Indians—he is again aware that he is “playing a hidden game” (165). He uses the word “jest” three times throughout the brief scene (“help out a jest,” “a jest is not money,” “is not the jest enough” [174-175]), which helps to explain why “in all India that night was no human being so joyful as Kim” (175).

Kipling also makes use of the linkage between joy and play as Kim enjoys his time on stage, playing “dress-up” at Lurgan Sahib’s home:

The shop was full of all manner of dresses and turbans, and Kim was appareled variously as a young Mohammedan of good family, an oilman, and once—which was a *joyous* evening—as the son of an Oudh landholder in the fullest of full dress [...]. The Hindu child played this game clumsily. That little mind [...] could not temper itself to enter another’s sole; but a demon in Kim woke up and sang with *joy* as he put on the changing dresses, and changed speech and gesture therewith (207; emphasis added).

Later in this scene, we learn that Kim is “annoyed” when Lurgan Sahib turns to watch “the Babu and not the play” that Kim is performing (207). Passages such as these are very important to Kipling’s text as they reveal two things about Kim’s character. The first, as I have noted, is the fact that Kim is always aware—at least when he seems manipulative or opportunistic—that he is playing a game of pretend. As the passage demonstrates, such “jests” or “performances” make him “joyful,” “joyous,” and full of “joy,” and the parallel between identity opportunism and the joint venture of play and joy are something that Kipling reserves only for the child Kim. This passage is also important, however, in that it reveals something quite telling about Kim’s hybridity: the narrator openly tells us that Lurgan Sahib’s assistant (referred to in the text as “the Hindu child”) “played this game clumsily” (207). Kim, on the contrary, is able to transform between identities and languages, between skin color and native dialects, flawlessly and with little effort. Which is to say, Kim’s own hybridity seems to work to his advantage in scenes such as this, where the other characters (and we see this in Hurree Babu and Mahub Ali as well) struggle to embody a different custom or culture—the child, we are told, could not temper itself to enter another’s soul (107)—while Kim effortlessly

portrays various identities because, on some level, the brown man and the white man both resonate with one part of his three-pronged hybrid identity.

This hybridity is why Kim is able to deliver a message to Colonel Creighton, and then turn around and spy upon the Colonel at the very same moment; it is why Kim relates confidential information to a crowd of listeners in the Indian bazaar; it is why he occasionally flees from his schooling at St. Xavier's in order to seek out his lama or to enjoy some much-needed time on the Grand Turk Road; it is why he is able to disregard the plans that Creighton has made for him, disappearing for a three-month holiday, without thought of repercussion; it is, above all, why he is able to remain at once an orphaned Indian child, an Imperial pupil, a player in the Great Game, and the beloved *chela* of Teshoo Lama.

Such an inherent ability to tease and transform makes Kim, in the words of Ian Adam, "almost instinctually qualified for these [undercover] activities, not only through his chameleon capacity to be Indian or British, but also when, prior to any training as a secret agent, he eavesdrops on the Colonel, learns of the military expedition, and amazes his Indian audience with his apparent gift of prophecy in forecasting war" (72). In this way, Kim seems very much to align with the figure of the trickster, who, in Ngũgĩ Wa Thiongo's description, "is very interesting because he is always changing. He always questions the stability of a word or a narrative or an event. He is continually inventing and reinventing himself. He challenges the prevailing wisdom of who is strong and who is weak" (Interview 2006).

Kim's chameleon-like quality, imbued, as it were, with intense political power is something that is not lost on Mahbub Ali nor on Colonel Creighton: "Remember this, Mahbub tells Kim, "[Being foolish is sometimes wise] with both kinds of faces, [...] Among Sahibs, never forgetting thou art a Sahib; among the folk of Hind, always remembering thou art—[...]" (191). Yet, for Teshoo Lama, the answer is not that simple, "To those who follow the Way," he tells Kim, "there is neither black nor white, Hind nor Byotyul. We be all souls seeking escape. No matter what the wisdom of the Sahibs. When we come to my River thou wilt be freed from all illusion" (261). In analyzing the juxtaposition of these two conflicting warnings, I am reminded that the priest at Umballa prophesies that Kim's sign will be "the sign of War" (128). On the literal level, the novel certainly plays with the impending war between the British Royal Officers and those in the hills. Yet such a prophecy also speaks much more directly to Kim's own internal struggle, and the ways that each of the various characters—unable to reconcile the co-existence of cultural and linguistic traits in Kim—seem intent on stripping him of at least one aspect of hybridized identity: "If you were Asiatic of birth," Hurree Babu tells Kim, "you might be employed right off; but this half-year of leave is to make you de-Englished, you see?" (232).

The Babu's statement confirms a sentiment that is not lost on readers of this novel, nor is it lost on Kim: in order to fit fully into either the service of the Great Game or the discipleship of Teshoo Lama, Kim must choose. It is this awareness that leads to Kim's complete "physical, psychological, emotional, [and] moral [crisis], all rolled into one" (Kettle 218). In this moment, Kim remains, above all, frustrated.

All that while he felt, though he could not put it into words, that his soul was out of gear with its surroundings—a cog-wheel unconnected with any machinery, just like the idle cog-wheel of a cheap Beheca sugar-crusher laid by in a corner (331).

As Arnold Kettle notes, such a frustration inevitably emerges from Kim as “a man cannot indefinitely serve two opposing masters”—I “must be free and go among my people.

Otherwise I die!” Kim, as the “Little Friend of all the World,” tells us (184). Yet once Kim awakes from his breakdown, lying flat upon the Earth, he returns to his familiar line of questioning: “I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim? (331),” although as Kettle notes, there is a distinct “change in the way he [Kim] formulates his...question” (22).

“Throughout his life,” Kettle writes:

When critical moments have forced him to pose fundamental problems he has asked ‘Who is Kim?’ And the question has been accompanied always by a sense of being alone. Now the form of the question is changed from the individualist ‘Who?’ [...] to the more fruitful ‘What?’ with its possibility of an answer which can resolve the contradictions between the one and the others, between the reality and the idea, between the world of the Game and the world of Teshoo Lama” (220).

In such a moment, we can thus locate Kim’s ability to live out his multifaceted identity in ways, as I have shown, that the hybrid adult characters in the novel cannot; for, as Kettle notes, in this penultimate moment, “The Game is not mentioned. His [Kim’s] being a Sahib is not mentioned. The answer to the question ‘What is Kim?’ is given in terms that make no reference to either. Kim is a man in the world of men, neither more nor less”

(219). Kettle continues:

He [Kim] could not have reached this sense of unity without the help of Lama, but it is not the Lama’s philosophy that he now [at the close of the novel] embraces; he could not have come through without the help of the adherents of the Game, but it is not the rules of the Game that he now submits to” (220).

In *Kim*, it consequently seems to me, Kipling has created a hybrid character who is not willing to ascribe to one culture or another; as the novel's only child character, he is the only character capable of exhibiting all sides of his pluralistic identity in a way that is not threatening or, above all, opportunistic.

Ultimately, this type of pluralism greatly parallels the imagery Kipling provides of the Grand Turk Road: it is a place full of colorful linguistic exchanges and vibrant merchants eager to sell to all varieties of people. It is thus hardly surprising that Kim finds himself most at home on the road. He believes that his service as a "chain-man [...] is good if it allows me to return to the Road again" (167). This recognition, the narrator tells us, leads Kim to yearn "for the caress of soft mud squishing up between the toes, as his mouth watered for mutton stewed with butter and cabbages, for rice speckled with strong-scented cardamoms, for the saffron-tinted rice, garlic and onions, and the forbidden greasy sweetmeats of the bazaars" (173). On the road, Kim can experience a level of anonymity—of, shall we say, hybridity; here, his allegiance is not divided between either Kimball O'Hara or Kim Rishti ke. On the road, he is simply Kim, and the text seems to confirm that this is the direction he will choose to take as the novel ends.

Clara Claiborne Park, in her essay, *Artists of Empire: Kipling and Kim*, does an excellent job of contextualizing Kim's interests to show that, at the novel's close, he remains loyal to neither the Great Game nor to Teshoo Lama: "Loyalties?" she asks rhetorically (558). "Is Kim loyal to the Game and the white sahibs who run it as he is loyal to, loves, his Lama? [...] Kipling's marvelous boy never once expresses loyalty to, or even awareness of the British Empire as a political or value-laden entity, as any kind

of entity at all. Kipling appends to an early chapter some verses about the Prodigal Son, but a prodigal who rejects the family reunion to return to his pigs” (558). She continues:

The book's direction has been clear from the opening chapter [...]. It is clear throughout, reinforced in every scene, every episode, every brilliant description. Kim's commitment is to the bright, sharp-edged world the Lama does not see, “the great, good-tempered world,” “this broad smiling river of life [...].” Though orphan Kim finds the object of his quest, the Red Bull on a Green Field of his Irish father's regiment, he finds no father there, and his one idea is to get back to the road again. Never does he show the slightest interest in anything outside India; this boy so curious about the world never asks a question about Ireland or England. They are foreign countries he knows only by their Urdu name, “Belait” (558-559).

Certainly there are critics who are uncomfortable with this type of Middle Way—this “third space of enunciation,” as Homi Bhabha would claim—although it seems to me that reading Kim in this way (as a child who actually lacks the ability to privilege one aspect of his hybridized identity and thus seeks anonymity and freedom on the Grand Trunk Road) helps to explain many of the complexities inherent in Kipling’s ambiguous stance towards imperialism (at least as is manifest in his fictional texts, for Kipling, an avowed imperialist, maintained a stated political position that was hardly ambiguous).³⁴

Jonah Raskin, for example, struggles with Kipling’s characterization of Kim. He notes that Kim is a character who,

can walk freely among men of all castes and creeds as their brother, and at the same time act as a government agent. He [Kipling] speaks of the ‘Irish and the Oriental in Kim’s soul.’ But there is no conflict between these two parts in his mind. [...] Kim is always in the Middle Way. He repeatedly

³⁴ While this debate is too far-reaching to go into any detail here, Rushdie’s own contentions most succinctly address many of the issues concerning Kipling’s colonialism. Peii Su summarizes Rushdie in the following account: “Kipling’s vision of primitive India embodies [...] the British Empire’s strategy of ‘divide and rule,’ making up an opening chapter of Indian history, orientalizing Indians (‘half-devil and half-caste’), and eventually convincing them of their inferiority to the white civilization” (9). For Said, Kipling, as a white writer and thus an “imperial agent,” has helped to assist in the official project of colonization by creating a “static system of ‘synchronic essentialism’ to inscribe the disparate gap between ‘modern’ England and ‘backward’ India” (qtd. in Peii 9).

questions his identity [though]...it never comes to his attention that he must choose between East and West, Indians and the empire. He does not see that a white man who is an imperialist cannot simultaneously be a friend to the colonized people (124).

Raskin's assertion that "it never comes to his [Kipling's] attention that he [Kim] must choose between East and West, Indians and empire," reveals, at the most basic level, a gross misunderstanding of childhood cultural and linguistic hybridity—for Kipling certainly believes that this type of simultaneity *is* possible, as he identifies with and recalls such in his own childhood experiences.

The problem with a response like Raskin's is that it seeks to map the adult's perspective of identity opportunism—wherein one feels compelled to adopt (or, in Raskin's words, to "choose" [124]) features of one specific group in order to fully assimilate—onto the child, who, as Anchimbe reminds us, will always already represent a mixed identity, as this identity "is theirs, the one they grow up with" ("Linguabridity" 67). Anchimbe states that the pattern of "conscious and opportunistic fluctuation between identities and languages [in adults] is different from what happens among children caught between two national identities" ("Linguabridity" 75). Which is to say, culturally or linguistically hybrid children fluctuate between their separate identities, "not exclusively according to the contextual requirements as the adults," but rather openly and without restraint ("Linguabridity" 75). This is because, as we have seen with Kim, they lack a unique root identity "from which opportunism among adults springs" ("Linguabridity" 75). Kim thus fits Anchimbe's definition of a "perfect linguabrid" in that, despite "societal pressure"—from Hurree Babu, Teshoo Lama, Mahbub Ali, and even literary critics like Jonah Raskin—"to choose one official identity," he is "actually unable to do

so because by birth” he straddles separate cultures and identities (“Linguabridity” 78). What we see is that choosing is impossible for Kim—and, perhaps, by extension for the child in Kipling as well: Kipling, we must remember, once wrote that India was “the only real home I had yet known” (*Something of Myself* 112). For Edward Said, “Kipling not only wrote about India, but was of it” (*Cultural Imperialism* 133).

With this understanding, *Kim* qualifies for what Said calls a contrapuntal reading: “We have been shown two entirely different worlds existing side by side, with neither really understanding the other, and we have watched the oscillation of Kim, as he passes to and fro between them. But the parallel lines never meet; the alternating attractions felt by Kim never give rise to a genuine struggle” (*Cultural Imperialism* 145). In the child Kim’s own words, this type of indeterminacy suits him best, as it opens up the possibility for new types of knowledge and experience to emerge: “Certain things are not known to those who eat with forks,” he writes in a letter to Colonel Creighton, “It is better to eat with both hands for a while” (176). Kim understands, in other words, what no other character in the novel can fathom: that antithetical notions of hybridized identities dissolve when (1) society no longer feels compelled to differentiate between the co-existence of cultures in one individual, and (2) when individuals no longer see the need to spontaneously change or adapt certain characteristics in order to feel more secure among majority groups. Kipling’s own experiences have taught him that such an understanding resonates most appropriately through the antics and experiences of a child. For this reason, he generously gives us Kim.

CHAPTER 5

“RESEMBLING NEITHER COMFORT NOR HELL, BUT FALLING
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE TWO”: CANNIBALISM
AND CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN
CARYL PHILLIPS’S
CAMBRIDGE

Homi Bhabha’s theories of cultural hybridity have allowed postcolonial theorists an avenue by which to consider the ways that marginalized individuals are able to combat the dominating forces of colonial oppression, cultural hegemony, and linear history. Bhabha argues that through a complex system of inclusion and exclusion, the marginalized subject’s entrance into mainstream discourse ultimately disrupts the dominant culture by flooding it with linguistic, cultural, and racial difference. In “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Bhabha explains how hybridity, through the lens of colonial mimicry, operates as a

[S]ign of the double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers (126).

Put another way, Bhabha's hybridity "splits open the once-monolithic discourse of authority and imperial identity and shows that discourse to be shot through with ambiguities and contradictions (Buchanan 175)," the effect of which, as Bhabha tells us, is "profound and disturbing" ("Mimicry" 126).

Many critics, nonetheless, have serious questions regarding the usefulness of hybridity, particularly when it is directly applied to postcolonial studies. Benita Parry has accused Bhabha of neglecting to conceptualize adequately the historical and material conditions that have been thoroughly conditioned by colonialism, and Arif Dirlik has claimed that hybridizing processes can serve as "ideological covers for proliferating divisions in the contemporary world" ("Bringing History" 97). Marwan Kraidy adds to the critiques of hybridity by drawing attention to "the tautological implications of its overly abstracted use"—noting that because "every culture is to some extent hybrid, we learn very little from assigning cultural practices and identities with the label of hybridity" (qtd. in Bendor 269). And Alberto Moreiras maintains that theories of cultural hybridity do little to outline the dissolution of hegemonic conditioning and the discursive construction of identities within a "feasible political programme" (qtd. in Bendor 269).

Linguist Roy Bendor summarizes each of these critiques with one simple statement: "the main faults identified by critics of hybridity can mostly be attributed to the common employment of hybridity to describe a certain [static] *state* of mixture" (270). Hybridity is, in Bhabha's words, a "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite,*" yet he never quite explains how this desire manifests itself within the social and material constitutions of specific

locations (“Mimicry” 126; emphasis added). Fahlander argues, accordingly, that mimicry becomes “confined within the colonial discourse and is merely an expression of the subaltern’s pathology rather than an active strategy” (27). While such hybridities allow the colonized to negotiate and reclaim a host of dynamic identities (linguistic or otherwise), Bendor argues that a theory has yet to be advanced that provides concrete examples³⁵ of how the emancipating processes of hybridity may be exploited to create new modes of cultural expression and identity creation. As a solution, Bendor argues that theories of hybridity must begin to pay “equal attention to the specificities of the hybridizing processes and their contexts, and to the role of subject agency in those processes vis-à-vis the social and cultural production of identity” (270). “This,” Bendor claims, “can be achieved by rejecting hybridity as a system or state and instead thinking of it as a process—a shift reflected linguistically in the substitution of the static-centric ‘hybridity’ for the more process-centric ‘hybridisation,’” a process that will be illustrated in greater detail below (270).

In a very interesting theoretical move, Bendor suggests that hybridization can be thought of in terms of metaphoric cannibalism, noting that cannibalism is, above all, “an intentional act of hybridization, and as such, functions simultaneously as a source and product of subject agency” (270). Bendor claims that the ability of the colonial subject to

³⁵ In making this statement, I am very much aware of the textual examples Bhabha provides throughout *Location of Culture*. In one instance, he speaks of a Mexican performing artist situated on the border between the United States and Mexico; in another, he writes of a Norwegian ship that was greeted with the Norwegian national anthem upon arriving at its destination. The problem is that the ship was operating under another nation’s flag and was staffed by a non-Norwegian crew. In *Signs Taken for Wonders*, he writes of the introduction of the English Bible in Africa. The problem with such examples is that Bhabha continually slips between actual and abstract spaces, as Lawrence Phillips notes, and in the case with the Norwegian ship, Bhabha simply provides an example of third-space effects rather than an actual third space.

cannibalize or pilfer from the dominant colonial discourse speaks to the way that the marginalized subject is able to disrupt the colonial system by a process of being both inside and outside that very culture. Because the colonizing movement must, paradoxically, create a group of hybrid beings to ensure the program's success—and then destroy those very hybrids when the threat of supplantation becomes too real—the colonial subject is placed both inside and outside the society at hand and this, in turn, makes cultural cannibalism a “telling cultural signifier or a lens through which the construction and maintenance of cultural identities may be interrogated” (270).

It is worth noting here that this chapter differs significantly from the other studies in this collection: for, while I rely heavily on Bendor's model of cultural cannibalization to show how such acts of incorporation result in a measure of power for the hybrid colonial subject, I also spend a significant amount of time discussing the implications of the widespread discursive use of actual cannibalism throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In so doing, this chapter does not rely on a single theoretical tack from linguistic theory. Instead, I draw from different colonial linguists to show precisely how the Western construction of the image of the actual cannibal is used to stereotype and enforce troubling notions of European superiority. This discussion ultimately allows me to show how “cultural cannibalism”—on the part of the colonized subject—aims to wrestle some measure of power away from the Empire in order to give the colonized a degree of subject agency. My analysis of hybridity in this chapter thus fuses Bendor's linguistic argument regarding cultural cannibalism with Bhabha's ideas concerning the disruptive power of mimicry.

Documenting the relationship between cannibalism and the nineteenth century, Peter Hulme, in his work *Colonial Encounters*, provides the following context regarding the discursive use of the idea of actual cannibalism: “Underlying the idea of colonial discourse [...] is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were *produced* for Europe through a discourse that imbricated sets of questions and assumptions, methods of procedure and analysis, and kinds of writing and imagery” (2). The cannibal thus functions in Western literature, art, and philosophy as a force that establishes and sustains cultural categories of Otherness, “marking the creation of a distinct European cultural identity through practices of discursive demarcation, segregation and marginalization” (Bendor 271). Borrowing from Hulme, Bendor continues:

As the modern Cartesian subject ‘depends for its sense of self as independent entity on an image of a clearly differentiated *other*,’ the employment of the cannibal as an active cultural signifier of tyranny, brutality and excess functioned to clearly differentiate the ‘civilized’ from the ‘savage,’ maintaining a safe distance from the worst ‘barbarians at the gate’ (271).

This view of the Western mythmaking of the other/Other, allows us to see precisely why the image of the cannibal manifests itself quite obviously in much of colonial fiction. Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* imagines Marlow surrounded by a crew of hungry cannibals who have been commissioned to help transport him deep into the Congo. Marlow remarks:

I do not pretend to say that steamboat floated all the time. More than once she had to wade for a bit, with twenty cannibals splashing around and pushing. We had enlisted some of these chaps on the way for a crew. Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place. They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them. And, after all, they did not eat each other before

my face: they had brought along a provision of hippo-meat, which went rotten, and made the mystery of the wilderness stink in my nostrils (36).

In this scene, Marlow recounts various details of his expedition—all things that he has experienced viscerally through the senses. He speaks of the number of men aboard the vessel (twenty), of the food they have brought on board the ship (hippo-meat), even of the stench of rotting meat that permeates the air. Never once, however, does Marlow ever admit to seeing an act of cannibalism take place—on the contrary, Marlow actually tells us how grateful he is that, “they did not eat each other before my face” (36). Despite the logical conclusion that in no way can Marlow really *know* that these men are, in reality, cannibals, he nevertheless continues to read gestures and signs throughout the text as evidence of cannibalism beneath the surface, even in the case of a white man—“I saw him [Kurtz] open his mouth wide—it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him” (59). As is often the case with references to cannibalism in colonial texts,³⁶ none of Marlow’s observations are based on empirical evidence; instead, he defines these men in relation to his own European anxieties regarding savage and barbaric Otherness, which, as Hulme reminds us, further establishes and sustains—for the Western self—the cultural category of the other/Other.

³⁶ Hulme provides a nice explanation of the instances of alleged cannibalism, where “the primal scene of ‘cannibalism’ as ‘witnessed’ by Westerners is of its aftermath rather than its performance” (qtd. in Bendor 272). Borrowing from Hulme, Roy Bendor writes of William Arens’s *The Man-Eating Myth*, wherein Arens—“based on his investigation of documented cases of alleged cannibalism”—arrive[s] at the conclusion that most anthropological accounts of cannibalism [are] devoid of factual substantiation” (qtd. in Bendor 272). Bendor continues: “Exposing anthropology to a sustained postcolonial critique, Aren argue[s] that in its crusade to concretise cannibalism empirically, anthropology has in fact abandoned objective scientific methodology to advance a Eurocentric view of the ‘other,’ revealing in the process none other than its own biases towards the subject of its scientific inquiries” (272). Clearly such an indictment also applies to many modern appearances of cannibalism in Western literature.

Bendor's essay, "On Cannibalists and Sociolinguists," provides a discussion of the discursive use of actual cannibalism and the impact this has on the nineteenth century Western self, in order to contextualize his theory that hybridized subjects metaphorically cannibalize dominant cultures in order to form and envision new cultural identities. Put another way: Bendor uses these approaches to cannibalism as a way to speak of: (1) the ways that the Western subject infuses in its dominant discourse the image of the actual cannibal in order to produce differentiations between the civilized European and the savage colonial native, and (2) to advance a new theory of hybridization, wherein the colonial subject—engaged, as it were, in the process of "cultural cannibalization"—creates the potential for a new cultural space where both European and native epistemologies can exist. For the purposes of this chapter, I will ground this fundamental idea—wherein the image of cannibalism functions as both a force of oppression and liberation—in the context of hybridization.

Narrative Strategy

Caryl Phillips 1991 novel, *Cambridge*, is a text that points to hybridization in a number of telling ways; Brad Buchanan even claims *Cambridge* to be "Phillips's most sustained and ambitious fictional examination of the problems of cultural hybridity" (183). Indeed, I would argue that from the very opening of the novel, the text is full of descriptions of hybrid liminality: the opening scene of the story, for example, is set at sea—in that nebulous place between Great Britain and an unnamed Caribbean isle. The novel is set sometime during the nineteenth century, and Emily Cartwright, the thirty-year-old daughter of a wealthy plantation owner, is embarking on a journey westward

with the faithful Isabella, her white “servant and constant companion,” and we learn that “Isabella has been both *mother and friend*” to Emily for nearly twenty years (11; emphasis added). Emily writes of the difficult weather conditions upon the open ocean, telling us that the “wind continued to rise and punch the ocean in all directions, whilst the horizon vanished as a sheet of rain approached *joining sky to sea*. The distant, towering clouds were soon obscured as the heavens assumed an ominous hue of *bluish-black*” (11; emphasis added). The marriage here between mother and friend, between blue and black, between sky and sea, establishes a blurring of boundaries that will continue not only through Emily’s arrival at the Cartwright plantation—where West Indians, emancipated blacks, and slaves live together with English citizens from every socioeconomic class—but also through the final pages of the novel, when Emily gives birth to an illegitimate white child, “a little foreigner,” that she and her black maid-servant, Stella, intend to raise together (183).

The narratives that make up *Cambridge* merge the nineteenth-century travel monologue (through the journal writings of Emily Cartwright) with the slave narrative (through the African Cambridge’s account of surviving the Middle Passage), and these accounts are ultimately brought into question by the third and final chapter, which consists of an official—albeit glaringly biased—report of the events related in the rest of the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin speaks of linguistic hybridization (in relation to his discussion of dialogics and heteroglossia) as “a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another

by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor” (358). Bakhtin’s conceptualization here is useful for readers of *Cambridge*, in that such a notion allows us to read Phillips’s work as a hybrid text in which the language of the colonizer and the language of the colonized are in constant communication. In this way, Phillips’s narrative technique mirrors the heterogeneous and hybridizing processes Bendor celebrates—processes which result in “the total obfuscation of the epistemological standpoints of colonizers and colonized and the creation of a new hybrid mode of ‘beingness’ that simultaneously embraces and rejects cultural difference” (274). The liminality discussed above (in reference to sea and sky, mother and daughter, blue and black) is reflected in the text’s masterful ambiguities, which effectively dismantles the rigid binary systems put in place by colonial culture. In the words of Janne Korkka, “Phillips subverts the traditions of (historical) fiction, making the marginal the central and vice versa, aiming to incorporate both into one, complex unity where it is not easy or very sensible to draw boundaries between marginal or central, black or white, male or female” (117).

Phillips’s text is also important in that both Emily and Cambridge work within the varying models of cannibalism Bendor offers in “On Cannibalists and Sociolinguists.” As this chapter will show, Emily’s narration aligns with the nineteenth century’s discursive use of actual cannibalism to solidify boundaries and to produce differentiations that will help validate the colonial social mechanism of repression. The character of Cambridge, on the other hand, performs Bendor’s model of cultural cannibalism, in that as he intentionally ingests certain aspects of European culture, his hybrid being begins to

envision the dissolution of existing cultural—even racial—differentiations. This process of hybridization, I will argue, ultimately poses a real threat to the colonial system and has the potential to help dislodge over time the edifice of Empire. I conclude by contending that Phillips's work imagines the possibility of a heterogeneous community that is, in Derrida's terms, *à venir* [to come].

Discursive and Cultural Cannibalism

An analysis of the major characteristics of Emily Cartwright's linguistic consciousness reveals that her narrative aligns most closely with the nineteenth-century colonial mindset, whereby the self is created through a process of negation, through its differentiation from an other/Other. Emily is quick to tell us, in her lengthy description of those "*Carib* Indians," that, once they were "presented with the improvements of civilized life they responded with apathy" (24). Such a description not only speaks to the troubling us-versus-them binary (as in, *we* "presented" *them* "with the improvements of a civilized life"), but it also provides a useful context for explaining Emily's intricate system of distinction throughout the text.

From the opening pages of the novel (excerpts taken from Emily's journey on the Atlantic and later in the Caribbean), the young Englishwoman sets about to put words to her experience so that, as an objective observer, she might recount for her father "what pains and pleasures are endured by those whose labour enables him to continue to indulge

himself in the heavy-pocketed manner to which he has become accustomed” (7).³⁷ As will be discussed in detail below, Emily turns to the European taxonomic urge once she is away from the comfort and familiarity of England. While Korkka claims that Emily’s desire to define proves that “she is gradually letting go of her thoroughly English identity and adjusting it to the requirements of Caribbean plantation society,” it seems much more accurate to say that her obsessive classifications prove only that she is trying to map a sense of European order and control onto the chaos of the unknown (116). Indicative of one out of her element, Emily controls her environment by containing the newness in language. Thus, she writes of the “Sea terms” that are suddenly swirling around her: “WINWARD, whence the wind blows; LEEWARD, to which it blows; STARBOARD, the right of the stern; LARBOARD, the left,” and so on (8). Emily both names and identifies the animals that occupy the travelers in their “peregrination”: the dolphin, the porpoise, the hawk-bill, the whale, the shark; and, once on the island, she begins the disturbing task of classifying the “native peoples” according to “colour” in order to satisfy her anthropological desires (15):

It appears that there are many shades of black, some of which signify a greater social acceptability than others. [...] generally speaking, the lighter the shade of black, the nearer to salvation and acceptability was the negro. The milkier hue signified some form of white blood, and it should be clear

³⁷ Such a quotation clearly sounds as though Emily is very sympathetic to the colonial subaltern, and, to some extent, during the prologue and throughout her voyage, she is. As Bénédicte Ledent explains, “Emily is presented as a moderate person. She condemns, in principle, the ‘iniquity of slavery’ and has a critical but balanced view of absentee landlords who, like her father, drive huge profits from their Caribbean plantations without ever bothering to visit them. Her perspective further inspires the reader with confidence because her journey is also an escape from the social and sexual pressures of English society [...]. Yet [as the novel progresses] Emily cannot free herself from the constraints of nineteenth-century England. [Such constraints, like class, good manners, propriety, and race relations] keep returning in her appraisal of the new world, as so many obstacles to the liberation of her mind” (84).

to even the most egalitarian observer that the more white blood flowing in a person's veins, the less barbarous will be his social tendencies (25).

Just as Emily is careful to outline the differences between white and black, she also makes note of the division between "imported slave[s] and the slave of local origin" (63), and, from here, she breaks the "field-laborers" into a division of three groups:

In the first group the big able-bodied men and the lusty women cut and grind the cane, and clear and hoe the land ready for replanting. The second gang is composed of boys and girls, those recently sick, and pregnant females, who weed and perform light tasks. [...]. In the third group are the mischievous pickaninnies [...] who have free range simply to hoe and weed the gardens (64).

To make sense of Emily's meticulous hierarchies, Bénédicte Ledent points out that readers of Phillips's text must acknowledge the way that science gained unprecedented power and authority following the Enlightenment; given this, "it is hardly surprising that Emily endeavors to appear as a neutral observer and uses the strategies of the perfect scientist to that end" (88). The problem for Ledent is that Emily's "formulation often betrays her subjectivity because its commonsensical tone exposes the notions she takes for granted, among them white superiority" (88). Which is to say, while Emily's sojourn in the Caribbean may liberate her from the conscious constraints of propriety that come from all-things English (she has, after all, escaped an arranged marriage), she is in no way liberated from the unconscious constraints of privilege and whiteness. Such an argument speaks to Edward Said's contention that given the cultural assumptions of the early colonial period, "every European [...] was a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (*Orientalism* 204), and helps to explain why Emily's inability—and here I mean *inability* and not *failure*—to see beyond her own blind spot belies much of what

she writes regarding the abolition of slavery and her father's role as an absentee plantation owner. As readers, we must view Emily's narrative as a text that confirms what Freud illustrated more generally as the human impulse for differentiation, and which has been discussed in colonial contexts by Bhabha and others. A careful overview of Emily's language indeed shows how her very words are imbued with what Bendor calls "a set of values," a set of ethics, which speak to the "power to signify, order and control" (268).

Upon arriving at her father's sugar cane plantation, Emily not only begins to categorize the slaves according to color and rank (as noted in detail above), but she also immediately begins to posit the difference of the slaves on her father's plantation by equating them with animals: she speaks of the "distant braying" of the "negroes" and the way their mating habits "have much in common with those practised by animals of the field" (32, 36). She writes that the slaves live in "nests," and that their children are "black wolf-cubs" who "parade in a feral manner" (67, 64, 24). Their skin is a "hide," and their hands are "paws" (102, 111). The negroes are "beasts of burden [... and...] scarcely tolerated spaniels"; they are "breeders" and "vulture[s]" (52, 68, 80). Her "dear Stella" is nothing more than a "melancholy ape" (91).

What's more, Emily actually goes beyond the disturbing zoological associations to draw a parallel between these previously outlined animal-like tendencies and literal cannibalism.³⁸ She writes:

³⁸ When Cambridge recalls his first encounter with white slave-traders in his native Guinea, he offers an account of barbarity that quickly reverses many of Emily's pronouncements regarding European civility and African savageness. Putting words to his fears regarding the cannibalistic tendencies of white men, Cambridge writes:

Their [the slaves'] fury bore more semblance to the wild irrationality of the lion than to the passionate intensity of man. [...] Content merely to roam their native territory, this led naturally to the undernourishment of their powers of reasoning, and the limited development of their intellects. Presented with the improvements of a civilized life they responded with apathy, continuing in that most base of all practices, the *plumping* of their fellow Indians for the purposes of consumption during their grand feasts (24).

Upon observing “the first part of the negro feast,” Emily again draws a parallel between the slave, the animal, and the cannibal (43):

The chief delights, greeted by the negroes with much bird-like screeching, were the feet and head of numerous hogs [...]. This favorite dish is intended to be consumed with cassava bread, and is known all through the region by the name of *souse*. For my part I looked on with revulsion as these cannibals clamoured to indulge themselves with this meat (44).

Together these passages reveal an important aspect of Emily's character that is ultimately of great consequence. The fact that Emily's writings would even include images of cannibalism speaks to the cultural context from which her ideologies have sprouted. As

I wondered constantly if these men of no colour, with their loose hair and decayed teeth, were not truly intent upon cooking and eating us, for they seemed overly fond of flesh, carrying about them pounds of salted meat for sustenance. Should they exhaust their supplies and feel desire rise within them for fresh quantities, it seemed to me only natural that they should turn to these helpless specimens in their charge (135).

Despite being told—from “other black fellows” aboard the ship—that “we were not to be devoured,” Cambridge's narrative continues to reveal his almost obsessive fear of being eaten: “I now resigned myself to the fate of being devoured by my captors,” and later, “I waited in trepidation for the onset of white hunger, sure that I would be press-ganged into service” (137, 139). It is not until he is commissioned into the service of an unnamed white master that Cambridge begins to believe that he will be spared from such an act of incorporation. We read: “having had the good fortune to fall in with John Williams [a clerk aboard the ship and the “most amicable native of Norfolk” (140)], my heart quaked only moderately, as he supplied truthful information to drive out [the] falsehoods” that based on the declining food, the crew “would soon have to kill and eat me” (140).

While Paul Sharrad is certainly correct in noting that such an example reverses “stereotypic perceptions” of black Africans, his argument seems a bit puzzling to me, as it consequently posits Cambridge as one, like Emily, who uses the trope of cannibalism—that “soul-sickening human feasting” (25)—to distance himself from all-things savage and to maintain a pure notion of his own cultural identity (203). It seems much more accurate to me to recognize the ways that Cambridge speaks of his cannibalistic fears in relation to specific encounters or perceptions, an approach which ultimately allows him to bypass “purist conceptions of culture and identity” (Bendor 274).

Bendor points out, appearances of cannibalism tended to correspond with Columbus's discovery of the new world, and, as such, these representations reveal the ways in which "cannibalism as a cultural category" becomes "integral to the creation of European cultural autonomy" (271). Because appearances of cannibalism in Western literature continued throughout much of the nineteenth century, we can easily locate Emily within this period to show precisely how, in Ledent's words, "she remains unconsciously limited by the European world-view" (85). In this way, Emily absolutely adheres to the Western idea of "cannibal hordes lurking on the borders," and as such, she uses this image—in fact, she actually perpetuates this image—in order to justify European colonialism through claims of cultural and moral superiority (Bendor 272). Thus, by dismissing the humanity of the slave population—either through zoological or cannibalistic associations—Emily is able to assert her own superiority while, at the same time, gaining a pseudo-sense of mastery over the "looseness" that she believes punctuates life in the British West Indies (36).

This, then, is why Emily feels so compelled to attribute some sort of demarcation to the slaves with whom she encounters. In what seems almost like an obsession, the young Englishwoman uses many value-laden terms, belonging of course to the discourse of racial typology and destiny, in order to sustain her belief in European superiority. I take the time to document Emily's insistent categorization—or, perhaps more precisely, her "careful definitions," a term she uses to celebrate Mr McDonald's observations (53)—because it speaks precisely to the ways that Emily becomes a European subject

involved in the cultural construction of cannibalism by consistently working to establish and sustain cultural categories which signify difference.

Emily refers to those of African descent as “children of the sun” (17), “dark helots” (37), “the great gang” (41), “sooty brethren” (54), “Afric’s despised inhabitants” (54), “sable-belles” (66), “breeders” (68), members of an “ebon community” (69), “sable freight” (70), “a congregation of black limbs” (87), and “son[s] of Ham” (87). In her writing, unnamed slaves are “blackie[s]” (30), “negro stock” (38), “creatures” (38), “cargo[s] of livestock” (38), “untutored savage[s]” (56), “swarthy dependants” (75), “tainted creatures” (97), and “she-slave[s]” (123). Children brought up in slavery are a “spurious and degenerate breed” (76), the “jettiest offspring of Africa’s black jungles” (98). Christiana is most frequently some type of “black wench” (31, 58), an “insolent negro” (58), a “witless negress” (120). Stella—the “sad black imitation” for Isabella (129)—is an “ebony matriarch” (37), a “dusky maiden” (37), a “melancholy ape” (91), a “skittish sable duenna” (123). Cambridge is a “black Hercules of a brute,” a “grey-haired blackie” (41), a “poor unfortunate” (41). He is a “poor wench” (42), a “sambo” (92), a “proud black” (92), a “dark sentry” (92), and a “recalcitrant African” (119).

At the linguistic or metaphoric level, Emily’s neat compartmentalization of slaves into abusive appellative categories, such as “a congregation of black limbs” or a “cargo of livestock,” relates most appropriately to cannibalism and the Western idea of the “self” (87, 37). Drawing upon the theories of Sigmund Freud and Maggie Kilgour (and, by extension, Julia Kristeva’s “abject”), Bendor explains the correlation between the two (cannibalism and the self):

As Freud has shown, the act of oral incorporation serves to create boundaries that construct a coherent sense of self through its differentiation from “other.” The bodily experience of incorporation is further translated into a structure of binary oppositions that manifests what Kilgour sees as a “crude system of values” where that which is outside the “territory of the self” is bad (271).

Thus, through her discursive processes of “demarcation, segregation and marginalization,” Emily functions as a nineteenth-century cultural cypher in that she “upholds a neat compartmentalization of social and natural phenomena [...], unmistakably recreating the same principle that keeps the colonial technology of domination in place” (271, 273).

At the colonial level, Emily’s distinct categorization also helps to subdue that which the colonizing entity most fears: namely, the blurring of boundaries and the dilution of Western superiority through the mingling of European and African blood. Such anxieties surrounding interracial couplings and the position of hybrids is most intense in the Caribbean scene, as, according to Brad Buchanan,

The social anomaly of hybridization not only breaks down the seemingly fixed polarities of race but also endangers the supposedly natural division of labour. After all, if whites are the born administrators and the negroes born fieldworkers, their “hybrid” children cannot be good for anything, since no occupational middle ground seems to exist (185).

We see the realization of this threat in the racially charged diatribes of Mr McDonald, the physician overseeing the Cartwright estate. Emily writes: “Mr McDonald went on and claimed that the clearest evidence of West Indian moral turpitude was to be found in the social evil of miscegenation, a practice contrary to the Anglo-Saxon nature, and one that gave rise to a sub-species of hybrid” (52). In Mr McDonald’s words:

The separation of castes in India [...] is not more formally observed than the careful division of shades in the tropics caused by [...] race-mixing. The offspring of a white man and black woman is a *mulatto*; the mulatto and the black produce a *sambo*; from the mulatto and the white comes the *quadroon*; from the quadroon and the white the *mustee*; the child of a mustee by a white man is called a *musteefino*; while the children of a musteffino are free by law, and rank as white persons (53).

Ultimately this system of fine distinction produces, for the Cartwright plantation, a version of the ‘one-drop rule’ (and the logic of “hypodescent”) and shows the tenacious boundaries upon which whiteness is predicated. Such a strategy also displays just how desperate the need is to claim any ounce of white blood in persons of mixed race: “The milkier hue signified some form of white blood, and it should be clear to even the most egalitarian observer that the more white blood flowing in a person’s veins, the less barbarous will be his social tendencies,” Emily claims (25).

It is within this double bind of wanting to claim whiteness in the other/Other, yet also wanting to disavow that very whiteness, that Bhabha finds fodder for his claim that colonialism is a corrupt venture, a serpent speaking with a “tongue that is forked” (126). While Thomas Macaulay claims, in his 1835 “Minute on Indian Education,” that colonial success in India will depend on the formation of “a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (130),” his cultural vantage point has no way of revealing what Bhabha knows so well: namely that “hybridity is a *problematic* of colonial representation and individuation, [in that it] reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon this dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition” (“Signs” 175). In short, Bhabha recognizes the ways in which the creation

of the “almost the same but not white” being is capable of dismantling the civilizing mission from within the structures of its own disquieting enterprise (“Mimicry” 130).

When the journal writings of Emily Cartwright fall away, Phillips’s novel provides a space for such a “not quite/not white” character to emerge (“Mimicry” 132). At this point in my discussion, I would like to gradually shift away from the discursive application of literal cannibalism—and the corrosive effects such a project has on the mind of the nineteenth century Western subject—in favor of discussing the ways that the colonial hybrid being is able to engage in the process of (what Bendor calls) cultural cannibalization.

Paul Sharrad provides a useful context for Cambridge’s “slave-narrative/gallows-confession story”:

From the anguished bewilderment of capture in West Africa, we follow Olumide ([Cambridge’s] original name) through his transportation to England as gentleman’s house-servant, his evangelical Christian education, liberation, and poverty-stricken marriage to a white servant, his activity as a preacher in the anti-slavery cause, his voyage back to Africa to convert his heathen brethren, his kidnapping, return to the Caribbean plantations and eventual death by hanging (203).

It is most appropriate to read Cambridge’s narrative account as one that confirms Bhabha’s theory of mimicry; for, from the narrative’s opening lines, the text makes clear the ways that the English system of colonial rule has coerced Cambridge to feast at the table of European superiority—has, in a sense, turned him into one of Macaulay’s hybrid subjects. As he commences his narrative account, Cambridge carefully expounds upon his own ideologies, which clearly reflect his belief that African cultural values are inferior to those of European origin (“thanks be to God for granting me powers of self-

expression in the English language” [133]). To understand the implication of this type of character alteration—wherein Cambridge actually begins to internalize and repeat the values he regards as superior—it is important to analyze precisely how he is encouraged by “the discourse of civilization” to delight in the offerings of colonialism.

I use the consumption/digestive metaphor quite specifically in this section, as such a perspective is central to the narrative of Cambridge, who himself thinks about absorbing European culture through incorporative means. He tells us that he was sent to study Christianity under Miss Spencer of Blackheath, whereupon he “earnestly wished to *imbibe* the spirit and imitate the manners of Christian men, for already Africa spoke only to me of a barbarity I had fortunately fled” (143; emphasis added). Lines later, Cambridge tell us that he “embraced this magical opportunity for improvement. Reading and writing, common arithmetic, and the first elements of mathematics, I *acquired* all of these” (143; emphasis added). Cambridge’s careful verb choice of “imbibe” and “acquire” directly corresponds to the various scenes in which his character eschews his African identity in favor of a more hybridized European sense of self. What becomes most prominent is the fact that when Cambridge intentionally ingests various aspects of European culture, an obvious transformation in his character transpires, often made most literal by a change in either name or place—sometimes both.

The first and most obvious example of intentional ingestion (or, in Bendor’s terms, cultural cannibalism) comes shortly after Cambridge, who, at this point, is still using his Guinea name Olumide, begins his journey on the boat to “serve *massa*” in England (139). Cambridge/Olumide looks upon his “white clerk” [overseer] John

Williams, with much respect, as he tells us that Williams had a very “*bookish* demeanor” and he was “clearly a recipient of much formal education” (141). When Williams is appointed to help Cambridge/Olumide “smatter a little imperfect English,” Cambridge/Olumide twice tells us of his “good fortune” at having fallen in with John Williams (140), and later confides that, throughout the journey, Williams “made improvement to my English language so that others soon came to comprehend my responses to words addressed” (140). The privileges that come with being able to speak proper English are not lost on Cambridge/Olumide; we learn that once his “dexterity with English words [is] multiplied,” his master grants him the advantage of being able to walk about freely, to “gather intelligence,” to improve his “situation” (143). Cambridge finds great pride in being able to thank his master profusely “in his own words,” and, once returned as a slave to the Caribbean, he uses his knowledge of the English language as a tool of coercion: “I decided that by degrees I would reveal to them my knowledge of *their* language” (157). As Bendor notes, the experience of incorporation works to set up a binary system of opposition which labels that which is outside the self as “bad” (271). “Intriguingly,” he writes, “the very same act of incorporation also operates to dissolve these newly drawn boundaries as subject and incorporated object become one” (271). We can clearly see this type of dissolution—and the threat it poses as it works to deconstruct the European sense of dominance—in Cambridge’s ability to speak proper English. While in “merry England,” Cambridge is initially given a measure of freedom once he learns to speak English (155); yet once he is outside the bounds of this country, it is his language use that leads to his captivity (“I related to [the captain of our vessel] the

tales of my previous journeys. [...] I informed the captain that upon arriving in Guinea I intended to introduce the English system of Christian education” [155]), his beatings (“Although no words passed through [Mr Brown’s] lips, it was clear that he had determined to reduce the *haughty* Cambridge, who by now had long revealed to all a firmer grasp of the English language than any [...] might ever conceive of achieving” [161]), and his eventual death.

Gone are the days when Cambridge felt “forced to admit their English talk which [...] resembled nothing more civilized than the manic chatter of baboons” (133); at this point, he prefers—quite intentionally—to speak English, and it is this first act of incorporation that marshals his name change from Olumide to Thomas, suggesting most powerfully how the hybrid identity is adaptable and always changing.³⁹

“Armed with an enhanced mastery of this blessed English language,” Cambridge/Thomas next desires a full introduction into Christianity (142); he writes: “John Williams introduced me to the Christian religion while I dwelt on board the ship. Unfortunately, I was unable to make a coherent sense of either his words or ideas” (143). As an Englishman in everything but color, and armed with the knowledge of the king’s good English, Cambridge/Thomas is, at last, prepared to hear—indeed, even to *understand*—the Word of God; thus, in his second act of intentional incorporation, Cambridge/Thomas approaches his master and “begged [...] for a full and proper

³⁹ Maggie Kilgour speaks of the ability of cannibalism to, at once, entice and repel; “the relation between an inside and an outside,” she writes, “involves a delicate balance of simultaneous identification and separation that is typified by the act of incorporation, in which an external object is taken inside another. The idea of incorporation [...] depends upon and enforces an absolute division between inside and outside; but in the act itself that opposition disappears, dissolving the structure it appears to produce” (qtd. in Bendor 270-271).

instruction in Christian knowledge so that I might be received into Church fellowship with both experience of the Bible and a conviction of belief” (143). As is seen in the discussion of language above, Cambridge/Thomas is very aware of the concessions and opportunities that come with Christian fellowship. In Cambridge’s/Thomas’s words, Miss Spencer of Blackheath “advised me that with a Christian education I would find it possible to behave with reverence to my betters, with civility to my equals, and to subdue in others the prejudice that my colour gives rise to” (144). Such a claim alerts Cambridge/Thomas to the possibilities inherent in Christianity, and he accordingly comes to lament “any time that passed away without improvement” (144); he rejoices when his “uncivilized African demeanor beg[ins] to fall” away, and he “resolve[s] to conduct [himself] along lines that would be agreeable to [his] God” (144).

Because his standing as an African produces a relationship with “the devilish dark Chus,⁴⁰ the father of the black and cursed Africans,” Cambridge’s position in the Christian church is a bit tenuous (144). As a consequence, in order to be brought into full fellowship—into full *incorporation*—Cambridge/Thomas must first purge his Africanness and supplicate to God’s will (both under the interpretation and instruction of Miss Spencer of Blackheath); it is through this renunciation, according to Miss Spencer, that Cambridge/Thomas will “gain access to the heavenly thereafter” (144). Once this task is accomplished—once the purging of his African roots is complete—Cambridge sets forth on a colonizing/missionary effort that will take him back to the shores of his

⁴⁰ Miss Spencer explains Cambridge’s predicament: “[B]lack men were descended from Noah’s son Cham, who was damned by God for his disobedience and shamelessness in having relations with his chosen wife aboard the Ark. This wicked act produced the devilish dark Chus, the father of the black and cursed Africans” (144).

native Guinea. Before he departs, readers witness the second transformation in his character, as “the good angel of Blackheath then set[s] a crown upon [his] head” and provides him with a new Christian name: “banished was black Tom, and newly born she gave to the world, David Henderson” (144).

In what I am calling the text’s “Cannibal Manifesto,”⁴¹ Cambridge/David Henderson clearly outlines the hybridizing dimensions of the charge he will undertake. He writes:

To expose the hypocritical iniquities of English custom was the main thrust of my mission. Its purpose was two-fold [...]. The first purpose of my mission was to open a school in my native Africa, so that those of complexion might acquaint themselves with knowledge of Christian religion and the laws of civilization. Those of England, who by means or motives of avarice were dishonouring Christianity, might thereafter witness the unnatural nature of their work being repaired by those of both England and Guinea working together in conjoined brotherhood. [...] The second purpose of my mission was to rally support towards the noble purpose of banishing the practice of slavery in the Americas that remain blessed with the good fortune to dwell under the English flag. [...] I concluded by declaring that sacrifices were demanded of us all [English and African], for we were all made in God’s image, though some of us be cut in ebony (149-150).

Not entirely European, yet not quite indigenous, such a *manifesto* resonates with the delicate dialect of aspiring for a new type of hybridization—a hybridization where “those of both England and Guinea [can] work together in conjoined brotherhood” (149). And while it could easily be argued that the mimicry displayed in this writing “does nothing but repeat the hegemonic structures of colonial discourse which serve to sustain the hierarchy of the west over the rest” (Godiwala 62), it seems to me that in Cambridge’s simultaneous identification with (“my Africa,” “us all,” “we were all”) and disavowal

⁴¹ I borrow this title from Oswald de Andrade’s *Cannibal Manifesto*, which was originally published in 1928, and is reproduced in Bendor’s essay “On Cannibalists and Sociolinguists.”

from (“blessed with the good fortune to dwell under the English flag”) his African brothers, he is actually deconstructing any notion of pure cultural identities (149-150).⁴²

Such an emphasis on multicultural identity is familiar to readers of postcolonial literatures, and, thus, it is hardly surprising that Cambridge’s *manifesto* actually serves as a microcosm for what Phillips seems to be doing throughout the text as a whole. I noted earlier how Bakhtin’s notion of a “double voiced discourse” speaks to the hybridization latent in the structure of *Cambridge*, as it certainly is a novel that plays out—spatially on the page—the ways that two voices can become “dialogically interrelated” (358). In much the same way, it seems that Cambridge’s program can also be read as a “hybrid specimen where the language of the colonizer and the language of the colonized are engaged in perpetual dialogue” (Bendor 274). According to Bendor, the result of such a dialogue “is the total obfuscation of the epistemological standpoints of colonizers and colonized and the creation of a new hybrid mode of ‘beingness’ that simultaneously embraces and rejects cultural difference” (274).

The problem with this approach—at least from the colonial perspective—is that such a hybridized state of existence blurs the boundaries between European and

⁴² The ambivalence inherent in Cambridge’s simultaneous identification and disavowal is particularly manifest in the ways that he chooses to identify and demarcate both whites and blacks throughout the text. For Cambridge, whites are “uncivilized” “human flesh merchants” (137), “vulgarians” (138), “long-haired spirits” (134), and “men of no colour” (134). Yet—importantly—they are also “*Christian* inheritors” (134) and “paragons of virtue” (135). At times, it appears that Cambridge, much like Emily, establishes and sustains cultural categories of the other/Other by using racially charged demarcations. He calls those of African descent “unhappy blacks” (135), “we of the despised complexion” (136), and “the black stock” (160); and, like Emily, he even turns to animal-like tendencies to describe his fellow slaves: they are a “dark and snake-ish company” (135). Once introduced to Christianity, Cambridge speaks of his own “uncivilized African demeanour” (144) and rejoices in his ability to renounce his “devilish likeness” (151). Viewing himself a “virtual Englishman,” he distinguishes himself from “base African cargo” (156) and “articles of trade” (156). And yet, dispersed throughout such troubling characterizations, Cambridge speaks of the “natural goodness” and “honest affection” of his people, and he beautifully recalls the way that his African parents loved him “with sincere warmth” (133, 134).

indigenous far too closely for comfort. In making such a claim, I am thinking specifically of Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown*, a novel that depicts the character Hari Kumar's struggle as a hybridized Indian native. The question of hybridity is so central to this text, that any perceptive discussion of it must begin by contextualizing the nature of Hari's hybridity (is his identity, for example, defined in an essentialist way, or is his identity defined through his lived experiences?). Hari, readers will recall, believes he is English for all practical purposes, and, as a child raised and schooled in England, he has actually spent his entire life believing that he is the colonizer. In this sense, Hari is such a hybrid being that, like Cambridge, he believes and feels like an Englishman. Upon his return to India, however, it becomes clear that Hari's hybrid subject position inverts the power dynamic of India, and, thus, he immediately becomes the target of Superintendent of Police, Ronald Merrick, who begins the process of writing Hari out of the system in order to mitigate the threat he poses to: (1) Merrick's relationship with Daphne Manners and (2) to British domination in colonial India.

Merrick, the text tells us, is insecure about his lower-class English upbringing. He confides in Daphne Manners, whereby we learn of his "very ordinary family" (102).

Daphne continues:

Although his father had done well enough, he was still only a grammar school boy and his grandparents had been "pretty humble sort of people." He had worked hard and done all right so far in the Indian Police which he thought of as an essential if not especially attractive service, and his main regret was that he'd never really had any "youth" or met "the right sort of girl" for him (102).

Hari Kumar, on the contrary, is a product of the colonial bourgeoisie. While Merrick speaks with a lower-class English accent, Kumar speaks the King's English. As a

hybridized native brought up with all the advantages of Englishness, Hari is given special status in India unlike any nativized Indian, and, even more than Dr. Aziz of Forster's *A Passage to India*, his presence in India begins to disorder the sense of innate superiority of the English. Here we thus see the necessary paradox of the white man's burden; for in order for the colonial movement to be successful, the colonizer must create, as Macaulay points out, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (130). Yet, at the same time, the colonial movement must also ensure that the development of this "class of persons" does not actually succeed. Which is to say, the justification for colonization must be directly linked with colonial failure.

This is why, during his time as David Henderson, Cambridge comes to realize that despite his attempts to repudiate African culture and custom, neither his English language use nor his Christian religion can make him a white man in the racially divided colonial world; in Paul Sharrad's words, Cambridge begins to understand the ways that he has been "enslaved by the discourse of civilization" (203). He and his white wife are duped out of their part of the master's will; he tells us that his appearance "often occasioned surprise and uproar," and that, in the County of Warwickshire, he and his wife "were treated with great disdain," and his "efforts to preach [...] fell on deaf ears" (150, 152). When his wife and newly born child die from the "pitiable state of darkness" in which they were living, a Christian minister openly refuses to bury the child with his mother, as the child had not been baptized a Christian. When Cambridge/David sets sail to further his mission on the African coast, he is robbed, bound, chained, and forced to endure a second "passage of loss" across the Atlantic, where, above all, he ingests a

seething anger⁴³ at the forces of control and domination that continue to repel his self-determined attempts at equality (156).

Having said that, we must also acknowledge, in Bhabha's terms, the menace of Cambridge's own mimicry, and the many ways that his awareness of the underpinnings and ideologies of European society give him the power to work against the machines of slavery and colonization once he arrives on the Cartwright plantation. Cambridge decides that he will reveal his knowledge of "*their* language" "by degrees" (157). When he is taken to his home/hut and put into isolation, he recalls, "I understood, through my own knowledge of the business, that I would be *seasoned* alone. Furthermore, I knew that any sign of indiscipline would be severely punished" (158). He approaches Mr Rogers, "the local man of the cloth," about introducing his fellow-slaves to the Christian religion (160), and—in an act of defiance that will ultimately lead to his death—he openly rejects Mr Brown's suggestion that he be appointed to the title of Head Driver. Cambridge writes:

Not wishing to be master to any, I declined, and so began the period of conflict between myself and this Mr Brown. He could not accept my *disobedience*. Although no words passed through his lips, it was clear that he had determined to reduce the *haughty* Cambridge, who by now had

⁴³ On three different occasions throughout his narrative, Cambridge speaks of the anger he has ingested. When his journey ends in the Americas, Cambridge is able to see the captain of the ship and his fellow traveler, a Frenchman, both of whom have robbed him of his inheritance and committed him to a life of slavery. Here, Cambridge writes, that "these buccaneers endeavoured to ignore my glare of Christian devotion tinged with anger" (157). Once he has been purchased by Mr Wilson, the overseer of the Cartwright estate, Cambridge makes it clear that his "visage betrayed no trace of anger" in spite of being bought and renamed "Cambridge": "He [Mr Wilson] pointed towards me and repeated the word as though addressing an infant" (157). Labeled with this new appellation, Cambridge confronts the realization that he is now "manifestly a West Indian slave (159)," and it is this awareness that allows Cambridge to take the anger inside of him ("It was evident that Mr Brown was both the object of my anger, and the cause of my *wife's* present misery" [165]) and translate it into agency. He is no longer content to stand by and be acted upon. He thus devises a "Christian plan" to stop the injustices taking place against both him and the slave Christiana, and he begins to think of his battle with Mr Brown "in terms of a holy crusade," which he is "determined to wage with all the energy and skill" he possesses (164).

long revealed to all a firmer grasp of the English language than any, including Mr Brown, might ever conceive of achieving (161).

Certainly while Cambridge is filled with a sense of confident defiance (his role, at this point, as mimic man, as cultural cannibal, is mingled with the knowledge of his own power), he is also aware that by rejecting the title of “Head Driver,” he is making his ability to disrupt the system known to Mr Brown. The overseer is, by now, aware that Cambridge has “gained the true respect of [his] fellow-toilers,” and we can rightfully assume that Brown is aware of his own reputation on the plantation: “Mr Brown reappeared,” Cambridge tells us, “seemingly unconcerned by the suffering he had inflicted, and oblivious to the gathering of slaves, all of whom viewed this man as a disgrace to his own people and their civilization” (162). Lines later, Mr Brown beats Cambridge, and Cambridge later retaliates against the corrupt overseer and gets himself hung—according to the all-too-biased newspaper account found in the third section of the novel—for murdering Mr Brown. Yet, to the reader, it is glaringly obvious that Cambridge is actually killed for adopting European culture, assumptions, institutions, ideologies, theologies,⁴⁴ and values far too openly and in a way that resembles, far too closely, the colonial endeavor.

In much the same way, Hari Kumar, in Scott’s *The Jewel in the Crown*, must also be demonized as a menace—must also be written off and imprisoned—in order to prevent him from being assimilated into mainstream colonial culture. Because Hari can

⁴⁴ Brad Buchanan convincingly argues that it is Cambridge’s Christian convictions which “make him an especially dangerous and rebellious figure in a colonial context” (186). Buchanan quotes from Emily’s narrative to substantiate his point that Cambridge’s greatest threat lies in his Christian beliefs: “Spiritually educated negroes would suddenly require themselves to be addressed as Paul, and John, even Jesus, and view themselves as equal with the white man in the eyes of the Lord” (97).

never be accepted as English in India, his mimicry fails in India, and he cannot be contained within the comfortable justifying system of colonial rule—a system which has little tolerance for the dismantling of the troubling *us versus them* binary. In this way, then, the system of rule—represented in *The Jewel in the Crown* by Ronald Merrick, himself the Superintendent of the Indian Police—must begin the process of Othering so that, in turn, the hybridized subject can be lynched, so to speak, without troubling the colonial conscience. This point is made most obviously in Scott’s text when Merrick and his Subinspector, Rajendra Singh, pause to watch Hari Kumar wash himself under a water pump at Sister Ludmila’s refuge. Sister Smith recounts the scene:

Some sign from Merrick had made the Subinspector stay put, to keep an eye on Kumar. When we reached the third building Merrick stopped on the verandah steps and turned round. I did so too. The boy had resumed his washing under the pump. The Subinspetor stood where we had left him, his legs and hands behind his back. I looked at Merrick. He also was watching the boy. They formed a triangle, Merrick, Kumar, Rajendra Singh—each equidistant apart. There was this kind of pattern, this kind of dangerous geometrical arrangement of personalities (132).

What this pattern, this “dangerous geometrical arrangement of personalities,” reveals is that, in the comfortable binaries of colonizer and colonized, Ronald Merrick and Rajendra Singh can comfortably coexist (132). Hari Kumar, however—himself the third point in this dangerous triangulation—lies on the outside of such a binary, and, as a hybrid being, he functions as a mark of difference that does not fit the neatly designed system of colonizer and colonized. Singh and Merrick, we see here, can never exist without the third party whose own slippage justifies their own superiority—and yet, paradoxically, Hari embodies an excess of difference that makes both sides of the binary divide quite uncomfortable. As a consequence, Hari’s presence needs to be destroyed,

and he needs to be seen as much as the savage as possible. Put differently, as “virtual Englishm[e]n (*Cambridge* 156),” both Kumar and Cambridge become—like Macaulay’s Indian interpreters or Naipaul’s mimic men— “inappropriate” colonial subjects who “cohere the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensify surveillances, and pose an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers” (“Mimicry” 126). “Mimicry,” as a force capable of destabilizing the colonial subjectivity and unsettling its authoritative centrality, is thus, as Bhabha tells us, at once “resemblance and menace” (“Mimicry” 127).

As a character aware of his own state of *in-betweenness*, Cambridge actually turns Bhabha’s theoretical formulations into an active strategy of disruption; for while critics of Bhabha maintain that “mimicry is an aspect confined within the colonial discourse and is merely an expression of the subaltern’s pathology rather than an active strategy” (Fahlander 27), Cambridge shows the ways in which mimicry can intentionally be employed as a subversive strategy in unequal power relations. It becomes clear that Cambridge is victimized and made menace because of his ability to, in the words of Aimé Césaire, supplant the colonizer and to usher in the “dilution” and “disappearance” of the dominant, even colonial, culture (53).

With his death imminent, Cambridge carefully scripts an account of the “extraordinary circumstances” that have brought him to this point. By taking “the liberty” to write his own account, Cambridge, in effect, attempts to redefine himself—in Helen Tiffin’s terms, to rewrite himself—as a vital and authoritative hybrid being in the margins of Empire, and his words reveal the active strategy he employs in order to disrupt the

colonial system. Once purchased by Mr Wilson, Cambridge openly tells of the ways that he will go about concealing his knowledge of European culture and custom—“I decided that by degrees I would reveal to them my knowledge of *their* language” (157)—and he plots to tell his new “wife,” Christiana, “nothing of my Anna [his former wife], not wishing to divulge [...] any of my previous felicity” (158). The examples here go on, but the point remains that while Cambridge at first appears ignorant and unaware—thus giving a false impression that he is pacified and harmless—he actually exists in a space rife with hidden agenda and, above all, agency. In this way, Cambridge’s narrative reveals the ways that he is able to fracture the European text by re-articulating his version of events in the second part of the novel. In so doing, Cambridge is able to pervert the meaning and message of *Empire*,⁴⁵ thus undermining and weakening the colonial agenda.

As his narrative closes, Cambridge is fearful that he will be killed for his crimes—“I was truly afraid, truly frightened of my actions and the fearful consequences of my heathen behavior” (167)—and he prepares himself to stand before his Christian God, not simply as Cambridge the African slave, but as a hybridized being conscious of his multiple names and identities:

I, Olumide, who had become black Tom, then David Henderson, and now Cambridge, had broken one of God’s commandments. [...] I say again: Pardon the liberty I take in unburdening myself with these hasty lines, but the truth as it is understood by David Henderson (known as Cambridge) is all that I have sought to convey (167).

⁴⁵ Paul Sharrad successfully argues that Cambridge’s narrative, “succinctly contradicts or undermines almost every confident observation Emily has made,” thereby disestablishing any sense of European superiority (203). He speaks of the ways that Cambridge’s narrative is able to undermine Emily’s position on black speech, her perceived lack of human feeling in the slave population, her romantic impressions of England, and her views on cannibalism.

Ledent maintains that, in these lines, “Cambridge’s complacent Christianity can only be upheld by rejecting his African self” (106). Rather, it seems to me that Cambridge fits very closely into Bendor’s process of hybridization. He identifies himself as “Olumide, who had become black Tom, then David Henderson, and now Cambridge (167),” and he writes: “I humbly beg that those of my dear England, Africans of my own complexion, and *creoles* of both aspects, might bear with me as I attempt to release from within my person the nature of my extraordinary circumstances” (133). It is in the synthesis of English, African, and Creole, that we can see precisely the tensions that are played out throughout Cambridge’s difficult ordeal, and in no way do I feel that those tensions result in a banishing of any part of Cambridge’s hybridized identity. What’s more, in a text that deals so explicitly with demarcating and categorizing, it is most telling that Cambridge ultimately flouts his initial desire to keep each of his names, lives, and identities separate (158) in the narrative’s closing lines. He signs off as Cambridge Olumide Thomas David Henderson; he presents himself as a “black Christian” (161), and recognizes that he is “an Englishman” who will be killed, essentially, for his “smudgy complexion” (147).

Ledent further claims that, as a character, Cambridge is relatively static and unchanging; he is one who “remain[s] paralysed” by his “dubious spiritual certitudes” and his refusal to acknowledge that “he is judged by the colour of his skin” (105). Certainly there are many formal and thematic features of Phillips’s text that could justify a claim such as this, but finally it seems to me that such an account fails to acknowledge the ways that the hybrid—or, in the context of this discussion, the cultural cannibal—has the potential to influence conditions by dissolving cultural differentiations and

“unleash[ing] new modes of political agency, empowerment and resistance” (Bendor 276). As Paul Sharrad points out, despite the fact that Cambridge is “killed off” by the third section of the novel, he is “none the less ‘present’ in the closing pages of the book” (204).

The Epilogue reveals to us that Emily and her former black servant—now her ‘friend,’ her “dear Stella” (184)—are living at Hawthorn Cottage, where Emily is recovering from the death of her stillborn child, which she illegitimately conceived through her relationship with the overseer, Mr Brown. This child, nicknamed “the little foreigner,” is something that Emily and Stella had intended to raise together (183). Brad Buchanan reads Cambridge’s death and the lifeless delivery of this child as pure evidence of “the hopelessness of hybridity in the novel (186)”; yet, in a very compelling analysis, Maurizio Calbi discusses the ways that this child, in Derridean terms, “can be seen as an *arrivant*, or something that will propel us to be open to the other/Other, to invite it into our communities, to be hospitable to the idea of dismantling barriers of superiority” (par 29). “It is mainly through the figuration of this child,” Calbi argues, “that [*Cambridge*] hints at a fragile heterogeneous community that is impossible for it to inscribe in the historical moment it fictionalizes, except as the unreadability of a secret” (par 29). Such a formulation also suggests the reason that Emily’s relationship with Stella can only be revealed in the third-person epilogue. Their union is not yet possible in the Eurocentric colonial world of Emily’s narrative, and, thus, Phillips effectively removes them from plantation society in order to show how these two women have transcended the ideological strictures of their time.

Another telling and important parallel between *Cambridge* and Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* is Parvati—the hybrid child born to the Indian Hari Kumar and the English Daphne Manners—as she similarly embodies the type of heterogeneity Phillips seems to be imagining. Just as any mention of Emily Cartwright's illegitimate child can only be contained in the epilogue of Phillips's compelling tale, all references to Parvati are held within the Appendix to *Jewel*, where readers are privy to the written correspondence by Daphne Manner's aunt, Lady Ethel Manners, to Lili Chatterjee on various dates after Daphne's death.

Lady Manners writes openly of Parvati's hybridity, noting that, "her skin is going to be pale, but not nearly pale enough for her to pass as white" (453). She tells us that, of this, she is "glad"; for, Lady Manners, herself an Englishwoman, "intend[s] to bring [Parvati] up as an Indian" (453). On several occasions throughout her first letter, Lady Manners makes mention of the fact that, when she views Parvati, she naturally looks past the skin color barrier. She does acknowledge that the only time she ever registered having an emotional reaction to child's color was when she learned of Daphne's death, and "they tried to show me the child to take my mind off things" (455). Other than this brief moment, however, Lady Manners writes that "it [...] meant absolutely nothing to me that the curious knotted little bundle of flesh that was lifted out of Daphne [...] was obviously *not* the same skin colour as its mother" (455). She tells us that "the difference in colour [between mother and child] was so subtle" that, at the time of the child's birth, she almost failed to notice a difference (455): "I did notice it. [...] Yes—I see—the father

was dark-skinned. But at the time this caused no emotional response. I noted it and then forgot it” (455).

As *The Jewel in the Crown* draws to a close, the novel ends with a nostalgic account of the narrator’s departure from Mayapore. As his plane circles overhead, he can see that all of the lights in the MacGregor House are turned on, and he imagines Parvati sitting in her room—in this English residence buried deep in the Indian countryside—practicing her music lessons. We are told, at this point, that Parvati “is another story, which is why her presence [in this novel] is tentative” (461). Here I hearken back to what Calbi says concerning *Cambridge*—that it is a story which “hints at a fragile heterogeneous community that is impossible for it to inscribe in the historical moment it fictionalizes” (par 29). Parvati, the narrator tells us, is a girl “admirably suited to her [hybrid] surroundings where there is always the promise of a story continuing instead of finishing” (461). She represents the promise of a culturally and racially hybridized future.

Likewise, the story that Phillips has crafted in *Cambridge* can also be read as one that will carry on. According to Calbi’s logic, the community that Phillips imagines “largely remains *à venir* [it is to come],” and it will arrive precisely because of those who are able to reject purist conceptions of culture and identity (par 29). That the “little foreigner” and Cambridge—the “man strung up, mouth agape, tongue protruding” (183)—are poetically associated is not surprising. Cambridge is a character who dies lacking any access to colonial power, although, as Bendor reminds us, “it is the process of hybridization itself and not its outcomes that manifest its potential to serve as vehicle

for socio-political transformation” (278). For me, this is the most interesting aspect of Bhabha’s reasoning: the ability of hybrid encounters to actually result in something *new* and substantially *different* than just combinations of new and old—colonizer and colonized—elements. A social encounter, we learn from Bhabha, may result in radically new practices and ways of thinking about things that cannot be traced back to a specific origin. Most such hybrid effects are, it seems to me, seldom radical and revolutionary, but rather consist of small displacements in the social fabric of our lives.

While some may argue that such a reading overstates the case and power of Cambridge as a hybrid being (think, here, of H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, where Ignosi is able to speak with an English tongue, though mimicry does not give him any real power to disrupt the colonial system⁴⁶), I cannot help but feel that this stance glosses over the myriad examples discussed throughout this chapter where Cambridge actually outlines how hybridizing processes may be exploited to (1) articulate new types of colonial resistance and (2) to create new modes of cultural expression and identity creation.

Phillips, born in St. Kitts and raised in London, is very much aware of the problems in positing a theory of hybridity; he is thus careful to construct a text that can speak of unifying cultural processes while also disavowing the inclination to use hybridity as a tool to reinforce separatist notions of both the nation and the individual. What I hope to have shown here is that when Bendor’s theories regarding the hybrid’s

⁴⁶ I make the claim that Ignosi’s mimicry does not give him any real power to disrupt the colonial system partially because *King Solomon’s Mines* depicts a much earlier moment of European colonialism. In this way, Ignosi can still be easily differentiated from the Englishman—he was, in fact, not schooled in England, for example—in ways that Hari Kumar and Cambridge cannot.

use of cultural cannibalization are applied to Phillips's work, *Cambridge* emerges as a text capable of envisioning a heterogeneous community at some unimagined point in the future. By borrowing characteristics from the cannibalistic act, Phillips masterfully shows how the physical unification of Cambridge and his colonial overseers (through what this chapter has called intentional ingestion) is replicated in the creation of a symbolic space where European and native epistemologies will eventually merge into one.

CHAPTER 6

“WE ARE DIVIDED PEOPLE, AREN’T WE?”: THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURAL LANGUAGE AND DIALECT CROSSING IN ZADIE SMITH’S *WHITE TEETH*

When Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* was published in 2001, readers immediately heralded it as a novel whose depiction of multicultural London was wide-ranging and comprehensive. In his review of the book, Clifford Thompson wrote, “To the multicultural movement in publishing and academia, [...] Smith brought her hilarious first novel, *White Teeth* [...]. Rather than putting positive faces on ‘underrepresented’ groups, Smith achieved the democratizing effect that is the real aim of multiculturalism by revealing the not-always-pretty mugs of *everybody*, and in place of the solemnity and earnestness of so much literature given the multicultural label, she brought her much-noted exuberance” (15). The Whitbread panel deemed it a “landmark novel for multicultural Britain, as well as a superb portrait of contemporary London” (qtd. in Squires, 80).

Indeed, Smith is able to capture in print this portrait of modern London through her masterful use of language, which combines Cockney and Creole, Bengali and the King’s English, into a melting pot of linguistic diversity. Claire Squires writes that the

Voicing of different characters and their ethnic groups is one of the most apparent features of *White Teeth*. From Archie’s bumbling homilies to the

‘appalling pronunciation’ of the customers Samad takes orders from in the restaurant, from Alsana’s wacky images to the hybrid street slang of the ‘Raggastani,’ and from Irie’s rising, soap-opera influenced, Antipodean intonation to her accusation that Millat’s Caribbean-toned speech is ‘not your voice’ [...], Smith displays a finely tuned ear for linguistic inflections and their sociocultural nuances (64-65).

It could be argued that the assortment of language Squires rightfully identifies comes from Smith’s effort to represent—in English—that which is foreign to English. To be sure, Smith does use rhetorical techniques that tend to be common in ethnic writing. According to Eugene Eoyang,⁴⁷ these techniques include contextualization and direct translation, whereby the writer attempts to “embody in a majority language the strangeness of a minority culture” and to “make that strangeness accessible to the reader” (23).

At times, Smith contextualizes the minority language by offering either an explanation or a translation. Throughout Millat’s argument with the ticket man in Chapter Nine, we read, for example, that “The Crew, on cue,” calls the man a “*Somokāmi!*” (192). While this term initially goes untranslated, Smith’s narrator eventually interrupts the scene to tell us that “there was nothing Millat’s Crew prided themselves on more than the number of euphemisms they could offer for homosexuality” (192). When Samad returns home to find his Bengali wife, Alsana, physically upset over the announcement of the assassination of “Mrs. Indira Gandhi, prime minister of India,” he turns off the BBC report and accuses Alsana of being “the perfect example of the ignorance of the masses” (165). To this, Alsana responds, “*Bhainchute!*” and a

⁴⁷ Eoyang does not include Zadie Smith as part of his case study, although Smith’s work certainly parallels his discussion regarding ethnic writers and their use of antihegemonic subversions within hegemonic languages. The techniques Eoyang identifies include mimetic cliché, contextualization, direct translation, and even moments that read like a lesson in the foreign language.

parenthetic translation immediately follows: “*bhainchute* (translation: someone who, to put it simply, fucks their sisters)” (165). And when Irie Jones and Millat and Magid Iqbal (all three still children at this point) cross the streets of downtown London in order to deliver a Harvest Day collection of food to a needy, racist pensioner, we read the following exchange:

‘For your information,’ snapped Irie, moving the nut out of Millat’s reach, ‘old people *like* coconuts. They can use the milk for their tea.’

Irie pressed on in the face of Millat retching. ‘*And* I got some crusty French bread and some cheese-singlets and some apples—’

‘We got apples, you *chief*,’ cut in Millat, ‘chief,’ for some inexplicable reason hidden in the etymology of North London slang, meaning *fool*, *arse*, *wanker*, a loser of the most colossal proportions (136-137).

Nevertheless, one particular moment in the text goes without context or translation.⁴⁸

Marcus Chalfen is waiting for Magid Iqbal to disembark from a plane that will bring him from Bangladesh to England. As Marcus waits, the narrator ruminates about the

“talkative but exhausted brown mob who rushed toward [Marcus] like a river [...].

Nomoskār...sālām ā lekum...ksmon āchō?” (349). In an attempt to mirror the cacophony

⁴⁸ An important moment in the text occurs when the followers of KEVIN: The Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation (“We are aware,” one of the leaders of this fundamentalist group tells Irie, “that we have an acronym problem” [245]), begin to debate amongst themselves how to deliver their propaganda-laden speech at Marcus Chalfen’s New Year’s Eve press conference. It is finally decided that they will read from “Sura 52, ‘The Mountain,’ first in Arabic [...] and then in English,” although this is initially met with a challenge from Millat (414). “Do you suggest,” one of the followers inquires of Millat, “that the word of Allah as given to the Prophet Muhammad—*Salla Allahu ‘Alaihi Wa Sallam*—is not sufficient?” (415). “Well, no,” Millat quips, and the narrator continues:

In place of the questions of honor, sacrifice, duty, the life-and-death questions that came with the careful plotting of clan warfare, the very reasons Millat joined KEVIN—in place of these, came the question of *translation*. Everybody agreed that no translation of the Qur’ān could claim to be the word of God, but at the same time everybody conceded that Plan B would lose something in the delivery if no one could understand what was being said. So the question was *which* translation and *why*. Would it be one of the untrusty but clear Orientalists [...]? The old favorite, passionate, dedicated Anglican convert par excellence Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall? Or one of the Arab brothers, the prosaic Shakir or the flamboyant Yusuf Ali? Five days they argued it (415).

that punctuates large crowds and cut-off conversations, Smith leaves the details of this scene unexplained. All we are told is that “this is what they [the passengers] said to each other and their friends on the other side of the barrier” (349).

Such linguistic features do far more than simply represent nonstandard forms of English on the printed page: they actually serve as a type of characterization, showing the ways in which the characters either identify with—of disassociate from—particular ethnic groups. In the third chapter of this dissertation, I used Brian Friel’s play “Translations” to examine how language becomes a marker of authenticity and cultural identification within colonial Ireland; here, I also take up the issue of how language serves as a marker for ethnic identity, though I have now moved to the more urban environment of contemporary London. This issue is significant, as readers and critics remain divided on how *White Teeth* represents interracial relationships and multiculturalism. One reviewer makes note of the text’s “optimistic vision of racial easiness [...] which celebrates differences as well as acknowledging them” (John Smith, qtd. in Thompson, 123). Clifford Thompson praises the novel as “candy with nutritional value: Smith’s characters [are] well drawn and [are], whatever their skin colors or religious beliefs, human beings first and foremost. [...] *You’re all very interesting*, Smith, the ringmaster, [seems to] be shouting at her multicultural creatures. *Now, back in your cages!*” (15). Yet, as Molly Thompson rightfully notes, “these claims are clearly reductive as they overlook the fact that *White Teeth* also tells a story of intergenerational tensions and cultural conflicts within and between its protagonists. Indeed, the text suggests that, as a result of belonging to different generations and holding a diversity of

cultural beliefs, the possibility of feeling at ‘home’ in this multicultural world is unlikely” (123).

As evidence for her claims, Molly Thompson interrogates the “subjects of genetics and horticulture, as well as teeth and hair, all of which are, of course, associated with ‘roots’ in one way or another,” although she never grounds her findings in the realm of language (124). For the purposes of this chapter, then, I wish to analyze Smith’s use of nonstandard language in order to problematize the notion of multiculturalism and interracial equanimity. This chapter will rely on Ben Rampton’s sociolinguistic research regarding what he calls “language crossing,” in order to show how the cultural multiplicity of *White Teeth* is not as inclusive as some may think. For, when Rampton’s findings are applied to the moments of language crossing within Smith’s work, it becomes apparent that the rules governing one’s use of nonnative languages are almost choreographed in the limited numbers of patterns possible. We can thus conclude that, for Smith’s characters, modern London is a world wherein very real restrictions and significant limitations are placed upon immigrant populations—even within a linguistic realm.⁴⁹

In his article, “Language Crossing and the Problematisation of Ethnicity Socialisation,” Rampton defines language crossing as follows: “Language crossing involves code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language that they are using (code switching into varieties that

⁴⁹ Readers should note that in addition to applying Rampton’s theory of crossing between different languages, I am also extending his findings to the crossing of different languages and different dialects and idioms within English. Indeed, Rampton himself also does this in his discussion of performance art and song.

are not generally thought to belong to them)” (485). He goes on to say that “this kind of switching involves a distinct sense of movement across social or ethnic boundaries and it raises issues of legitimacy which, in one way or another, participants need to negotiate in the course of their encounter” (485). The implication of such a statement is that while crossers may somewhat successfully navigate the boundaries between languages, the cultural barriers they have to traverse are, for the most part, impenetrable. Thus language crossers are highly conscious of their language use (by which I mean mainly nonstandard language use), and, as a result, the language used by crossers tends to come across as formal, controlled, guarded, artificial—in a word, *inauthentic*. Ultimately this tie between linguistic authenticity and racial identity reveals the primary difference between this chapter and the previous chapters within this dissertation: as a sociolinguist, Rampton’s research is focused not on particular speech patterns or speech communities (as we have seen with Anchimbe, Lim and Ansaldo, Klein, and Bendor); rather, his work considers language contact between several communities and its consequences for these communities and their language practices.

Rampton conducted his research in 1984 and 1987, and his fieldwork took place at two middle schools in England’s South Midlands. His aim was to “[focus] on language crossing among adolescents: The ways that youngsters of Asian and Anglo descent used Caribbean-based Creole, the ways Anglos and Caribbeans used Panjabi [Punjabi], and the way stylized Indian English was used by all three” (489). By focusing on the context around which language crossing occurs, Rampton concludes that crossing is not an unconstrained form of expression; it “does not imply that the crosser [can] move

unproblematically in and out of their friends' heritage language in any new kind of open bicultural code-switching" (Rampton 501). He thus concludes that "the boundaries round ethnicity [are] relatively fixed," and that "language crossing cannot be seen as a runaway deconstruction of ethnicity, emptying it of all meaning (501).

For a fictional illustration of Rampton's findings, I turn now to an analysis of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*—a text, as previously noted, that appears to abound with multiculturalism and multiplicity. The story follows the lives of two married couples (Archie Jones, a lower-class Englishman, and his Jamaican wife, Clara; and Samad and Alsana Iqbal, both of native Bengali Muslim heritage), their three English-born children (Irie Jones and Millat and Magid Iqbal), and the Chalfens, a family of middle-class Jewish intellectuals. As Christian Mair notes, the characters in this novel are all "carefully arranged so as to allow the author to deal with the maximum number of conflicts between groups: between men and women, between old and young or, more particularly, between the parent immigrant generation and their British-born children, between whites and blacks, between Asians and blacks, and, less prominently, between Asian and whites" ("Language Code" 235). "It is a small wonder," Mair concludes, "that in this situation the author pays a lot of attention to details of characters' linguistic usage" ("Language Code" 235).

Certainly the linguistic variety at work within this novel is complicated, and so I wish to address a couple of important points. The first is to note one of the inherent assumptions of the novel: that Samad and Alsana—both native Bengali speakers of Bangladeshi descent—are, in fact, engaged in the process of language crossing from

Bengali to Standard English throughout Smith's entire novel.⁵⁰ In his article "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," Meir Sternberg considers how the foreign tongue might be comprehensibly represented in English, and he identifies three general strategies, one of which—*homogenizing convention*—is applicable here. According to Sternberg, *homogenizing convention* occurs when foreigners or nonhuman species are assumed to be automatically fluent in a native tongue; this technique allows for "the freedom of reference while dismissing the resultant variations in the [foreign] language presumably spoken by the characters as an irrelevant, if not distracting, representational factor" (224). In other words, Sternberg identifies *homogenizing convention* as a rhetorical technique used by authors to homogenize the complexities a plurilinguistic environment.⁵¹ Sternberg provides an example:

Alice does not find it strange to hear the White Rabbit muttering to itself in English, and there is indeed no reason why she should. After all, does not Balaam's ass break into pure Biblical Hebrew and does not la Fontaine's fox bring to bear on the poor raven all the rhetorical resources of French? Even more extreme, such linguistic uniformity may not be simply a conventional measure of simplification but a vital basis for the

⁵⁰ The same argument can be made of Clara Bowden, although her use of Standard English is much more naturalized, as she immigrated to London, with her mother, when she was a three year-old child. The text provides many instances of Clara unintentionally slipping back into Jamaican Creole when she feels threatened or emotional, and we can thus deduce that, like Alsana, learning to speak English has required some kind of effort for Clara as a learner. When Joyce Chalfen—standing in her living room in front of a line of pictures featuring "dead white men in starched collars" (293)—begins to ask Clara from "which side" (either the Jamaican or the English) her daughter, Irie, gets her intelligence, Clara stammers and begins to think, in Creole, of her English grandfather: "Djam, fool bwoy taut he owned everything he touched [...] Captain Charlie Durham was a no-good djam fool bwoy" (294). Wanting to impress Joyce with her English heritage, however, Clara responds to the inquiry with the following: 'My side,' said Clara tentatively. 'I guess the English in my side. My grandfather was an Englishman, quite la-di-da, I've been told. His child, my mother, was born during the Kingston earthquake, 1907. I used to think maybe the rumble knocked the Bowden brain cells into place 'cos we been doing pretty well since then' (294).

⁵¹ For a thorough analysis of the way that homogenizing convention works in film (or, more specifically, in the *Star Trek* trilogy), see Thomas O. Beebee's "The Fiction of Translation: Abdelkebir Khativi's 'Love in Two Languages.'" *SubStance*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Issue 73 (1994). 63-78.

work's overall structuring and functionality: in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the development of the most complex figurative patterns known to literary art hinges on the anti-historical Englishing of the polylingual discourse held in the world of Romans and Egyptians (224).

While Smith's use of *homogenizing convention* is flawless and fluid, there are moments when she reminds us, as readers, that we are dealing with nonnative speakers as characters (Alsana's niece even speaks to her "in Bengali," written, of course, in English several times throughout the text [53]). Smith provides a very diverse assortment of these rhetorical cues,⁵² although one particular scene—where we are reminded three times in the space of three pages that we are dealing with nonnative speakers—will sufficiently serve to elucidate this point.

Chapter Four is appropriately titled "Three Coming," and this designation prepares readers for the exchange taking place between Clara, Alsana, and Alsana's niece, Neena, all of whom have met for lunch in Kilburn Park. Alsana's status as a nonnative speaker is first revealed to us when Clara and Alsana begin to speak of their respective pregnancies, and Alsana cannot recall the appropriate word for "ultrasound."

We read:

Alsana says, 'Nobody's complaining, let's get that straight. Children are a blessing, the more the merrier. But I tell you, when I turned my head and saw that fancy ultra-business thingummybob...'

⁵² We even see Alsana's husband, Samad, revert to his native language of Bengali in the final scene of the book, when his emotions are heightened and the lies and betrayals of his friend, Archie, are made public:

"Archibald!" He turns from the doctor toward his lieutenant and releases a short, loud, hysterical laugh; he feels like a new bride looking at her groom with perfect recognition just at the moment when everything between the two of them has changed. "You two-faced bugging bastard trickster misā mātā, bhainchute, shora-baicha, syut-morāni, haraam jaddā..."

Samad tumbles into the Bengali vernacular, so colorfully populated by liars, sister-fuckers, sons and daughters of pigs, people who give their own mothers oral pleasure...

‘*Ultrasound*,’ corrects Clara, through a mouthful of rice (63).

The second breakdown, which points to the fact that Alsana is still attempting to master lower-class English, takes place lines later, as the women begin to discuss potential names for their children. When Clara notes that she and her husband, Archie, have very different views on the naming of children (she wants “Irie” and he wants “Sarah”),

Alsana intervenes with her advice:

For pity’s sake, what does Archibald know about *funky*. Or *different*. If I were you dearie, [...] I’d choose Sarah and let that be an end to it. Sometimes you have to let these men have it their way. Anything for a little—**how do you say it in the English?** For a little—she puts her finger over tightly pursed lips, like a guard at the gate—shush (64; emphasis added).

The final reminder of Alsana’s status as a nonnative English speaker takes place toward the end of this scene, when Alsana’s traditional views lead to a conversation on arranged marriage:

‘Yes,’ Alsana tells us, ‘I was married to Samad Iqbal the same evening of the very day I met him. Yes I didn’t know him from Adam. But I liked him well enough [...] Now, every time I learn something more about him, *I like him less*. So you see, we were better off the way we were.’

Neena stamps her foot in exasperation at the skewed logic.

‘Besides, I will never know him well. Getting anything out of my husband is like trying to squeeze water out when you’re stoned.’

Neena laughs despite herself. ‘Water out of a *stone*’ (66).

The above passage provides a typical exchange of a second-generation fluent speaker (Neena) correcting the broken English of a first-generation nonfluent speaker (Alsana). Yet this scene is also telling in that Alsana’s dialogue is also riddled with the incessant repetition of rather basic words. She says, “I do not see what’s so very funny-funny,” “I

cannot be worrying-worrying all the time,” “talk, talk, talk, and it will be better” (67-68). Through this double articulation, we, as readers, get the sense that Alsana is trying to get her Bengali-trained mind to come up with the words that are now imposed upon it by her English tongue. Thus, the extra seconds the repetition provides allows her to think through the complexity of the English language while continuing to speak. At one point, later in the text, the narrator ruminates on the lives of Millat and Magid and, in so doing, provides a commentary that is most applicable to this discussion. “The brothers,” the narrator tells us, “will race toward the future only to find they more and more eloquently express their past, that place where they have *just been*. Because this is the other thing about immigrants (‘fugees, émigrés, travelers): they cannot escape their history any more than you yourself can lose your shadow” (385). In much the same way, Alsana cannot escape her native language, and Zadie Smith uses the rhetorical techniques discussed above to show precisely how Alsana’s linguistic shadow remains intact.

In addition to homogenizing convention and the necessary breakdowns (or reminders) we see in this rhetorical technique, we must also be aware of that fact that throughout the text, the Caribbean-born Creole speakers engage in very little language crossing (at least in relation to the other characters). There are certain instances where Clara engages in a type of code-switching—using a standard English form of negation (“*You do not say*” [21]) at one point, and relying on a Creole negation at another (“*if ya nah like it*” [45])—and her use of standard English becomes much more fluent as she ages. But, for the most part, Smith reserves Creole—as a distinct and separate language—for her characters of Jamaican descent. The speech patterns of Clara’s

mother, Hortense Bowden, for example, remain unaffected throughout the work, despite her immigration to England some fifteen years prior. In one of her first lines of dialogue, Hortense attempts to explain to Clara the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses: "Dem dat died widout knowing de Lord, will be *resurrected* and dem will have anudder chance"

(33). Later, she describes the character of Ryan Topps:

'The farder is a terrible man, gambler an' whoremonger [...] so after a while, I arks him to come and live with me, seein' how de room empty and Darcus gone. 'Im a very civilized bwoy. Never married, though. Married to de church, yes, suh! An' 'im call me Mrs Bowden deez six years, never any ting else.' Hortense sighed ever so slightly. 'Don' know de meaning of bein' improper. De only ting he wan' in life is to become one of de Anointed. I have de greatest hadmiration for him. He himproved so much. He talk so posh now, you know! And 'im very good wid de pipin' an' plummin' also' (320).

In her last line of dialogue, Hortense continues to claim that "dere are only two kind of people in de world [...]: dem who sing for de Lord and dem who rejeck 'im at de peril of dem souls" (439). Ultimately Hortense's language use reveals several phonological characteristics regarding Jamaican Creole (like the dropping of the 'h' in 'im, or the inclusion of the 'h' before any word beginning with a vowel, like *hadmiration* and *himproved*⁵³), yet it is also telling that her speech patterns never evolve. Neither does the Creole of Denzel and Clarence, two of the "uniquely rude, foul-mouthed octogenarian Jamaicans" who regularly dine at Abdul-Mickey's pool hall (157). Smith and Clarence—regardless of the day or even the year—are perpetually engaged in a game of dominos, and, to highlight the static nature of the Jamaican tongue, they often repeat a version of

⁵³ Ironically, such features are also salient, defining characteristics of Cockney. I am reminded of the classic scene in *My Fair Lady* when Professor of Phonetics, Henry Higgins, attempts to transform the Cockney tongue of Eliza Doolittle into that of impeccable upper class English. Eliza endures speech tutoring and endlessly repeats phrases such as "In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen," in order to learn that her "h"s must be aspirated.

the same conversation: “What dat babaclaat say? [...] Cannot ‘im see me playin’ domino?” (157). And later, “Wass dat? [...] You kyan see me playing dominoes? You trin’ to deprive an ol’ man of his pleasure?” (206). Even the rhyming couplets of “Mad Mary,” the bagwoman who roams the streets of North London, remain distinctly Creole:

Suddenly she was screaming. ‘BLACK MAN! DEM BLOCK YOU
EVERYWHERE YOU TURN! [...]’
‘BLACK MAN!’ (She liked to speak in rhyming couplets.)
‘THE BITCH SHE WISH TO SEE YOU BURN! (148).

While it is difficult to surmise precisely why Smith does not grant her Jamaican characters access to the multiplicity that comes from language crossing⁵⁴ (again, Clara is the slight exception here), it seems useful to consider that—as native Creole speakers—they very well may not need access to the authority crossers tend to imbue in nonnative languages. For, even in diaspora communities, most linguists agree that “Caribbean Creoles show few signs of attrition or disappearing” and that, today, the language itself is seen as a “legitimate strand [in] the multicultural fabric of present-day Britain” (Mair, “Language Code” 231, 233). Christian Mair explains that, in the case of contemporary London, Creole has some sense of permanence because it remains “a rich expressive code with considerable covert prestige” through its association with Black British English (“Language Code” 234). He elaborates:

Black British English [is] an optional additional symbolic code available to all members of the Afro-Caribbean community, that is people from Caribbean states and territories other than Jamaica and, most importantly, the British-born descendants of the original immigrants, who—while

⁵⁴ A practical reason as to why Smith’s Jamaican characters do not cross is that, within the 1990s London of the novel, Jamaican Creole has become a bastardized version of English, and it is thus semi-comprehensible to native English speakers. Bengali, on the other hand, is entirely incomprehensible to the English ear, so it is hardly surprising that Smith’s Bengali characters must learn to engage in the process of language crossing.

usually solid native speakers of the socially appropriate vernacular of their home region in Britain—have continued to cultivate a somewhat simplified version of Jamaican Creole as a means of asserting a separate group identity (233).

Following Mair's assumption, it seems obvious why the Jamaican-born characters in Smith's novel do not engage in the act of language crossing: because, the larger acceptance of Caribbean Creole within modern London already affirms this group's identity. The implication here is that with an inherent credibility—and a tongue that is already somewhat comprehensible to native English speakers—these Caribbean-born characters are not compelled to cross into Bengali or Standard English in order to establish a sense of self or to vie for a position within the diversity of contemporary London.

Access to such a state of acceptance is certainly not available to all of the characters in *White Teeth*, however, and thus some of the novel's most prominent examples of language crossing involve both Bengali and English characters *crossing over* into a version of Jamaican patois in an attempt to perform identity and to negotiate community boundaries by distancing themselves from the social mainstream. Central to this argument is the context in which such crossing transpires; for, as Rampton's field research shows us, moments of linguistic crossing are indeed limited to a prescribed set of conditions and choreographed social interactions.

Rampton's research reveals that "crossing generally only occur[s] in moments, activities, and relationships in which the constraints of ordinary social order [are] relaxed and normal social relations [cannot] be taken for granted" (500). As such, he identifies a few distinct platforms upon which individuals can safely code-cross—to respond to a

perceived injustice; in games, joke, or jest; and as a performance art—each of which Smith represents, fictionally, in the language crossing of *White Teeth*.

The most obvious example of language crossing in response to a perceived injustice takes place when the second-generation Bengali immigrant, Millat Iqbal (together with his urban street gang, the *Raggastani*), encounters some resistance from the ticket man at the King's Cross train station. As Millat approaches the ticket counter to pay for his fare, we read:

Millat spread his legs like Elvis and slapped his wallet down on the counter. 'One for Bradford, yeah?'

The ticket man put his tired face close up to the glass. 'Are you asking me, young man, or telling me?'

'I just say, yeah? One for Brandfard, yeah? You got some problem, yeah? Speaka da English? This is King's Cross, yeah? One for Bradford, innit?' [...]

'That'll be seventy-five pounds, then, please.'

This was met with displeasure by Millat and Millat's Crew.

'You what? Takin' liberties! Seventy—*chaaa*, man. That's *moody*. I aint payin' no seventy-five pounds!'

'Well, I am afraid that's the price. Maybe next time you mug some poor old lady,' said the ticket man [...], you could stop in here first *before* you go to the jewelry store.'

'Liberties!' squealed Hifan.

'He's cussin' you, yeah?' confirmed Ranil.

'You better tell 'im,'" warned Rajik [...].

The Crew, on cue: '*Somokāmi!*' (191-192).

The language crossing in this scene, as the narrator is quick to tell us, involves “a strange mix” of Jamaican patois (“*chaaa*, man”), Bengali (“*Somokāmi!*”), Cockney (“Takin’ liberties [...] he’s cussin’ you”), and Standard English (191). That certain characters use both Jamaican and Bengali seems to imply a type of coalition and group identification in response to white racism (as opposed to cross-cultural poaching), which is confirmed later in the text when the narrator breaks to introduce readers to the methodology behind the *Raggastani*. Millat and his crew engage in this linguistic mixture after they perceive three separate injustices: the first, when the ticket man disapproves of Millat’s approach (‘Are you asking me, young man, or telling me?’); the second, when the ticket man asks for the seventy-five pounds; and the third, when he looks “pointedly at the chunky gold that fell from Millat’s ears, wrists, fingers, and from around his neck” and accuses him of thievery and of spending his money in all the wrong places (“Maybe next time you mug some poor old lady [...], you could stop in here first *before* you go to the jewelry store”) (191).

This scene reveals a number of key points regarding the actual performance of language. Rampton argues that the long-held belief regarding ethnicity as an “unchangeable inheritance” is limiting, in that it only offers individuals two choices: “they can either (a) embrace and cultivate their own ethnicity, or (b) deemphasize it and drop it as a relevant category” (487). “What is generally missing,” Rampton goes on to say, “is a recognition of the possibility that participants might themselves see ethnicity as something ‘produced’ rather than simply ‘given’ [...], and they could encounter a third option: (c) taking on *someone else’s* ethnicity, or creating a new one” (487). The scene

described in detail above speaks precisely to this notion of creating a new ethnic identity by drawing from other cultures and languages. Indeed, the narrator tells us that the *Raggastani* is a kind of “cultural mongrel” (192):

Raggastanis spoke a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati and English. Their ethos, their manifesto, if it could be called that, was equally a hybrid thing: Allah *featured*, but more as a collective of big brother than a supreme being, a hard-as-fuck *geezer* who would fight in their corner if necessary; Kung Fu and the works of Bruce Lee were also central to the philosophy; added to this was a smattering of Black Power (as embodied by the album *Fear of a Black Planet*, Public Enemy); but mainly their mission was to put the invincible back in Indian, the Bad-aaaass back in Bengali, the P-Funk back in Pakistani (192).

Imbedded in the last line of the narrator’s characterization is the reasoning behind the creation of the Raggastani: “to put the invincible *back* in Indian, the Bad-aaaass *back* in Bengali, the P-Funk *back* in Pakistani” (192; emphasis added). The triple repetition of the word “back” draws attention to this central feature of the group and speaks—in antithetical terms—to the Raggastani’s presumption that something of the members’ respective cultures (Indian, Bengali, and Pakistani) has indeed been taken away, perhaps dismissed,⁵⁵ by Londoners in general. As such, in his encounter with the ticket man, Millat actually performs a racial and linguistic identity that is not his own in order to assert a sense of dominance and to overcome the restrictions imposed upon him by his own Benagli-English identity. In fact, he actually goes a step beyond this—indicating

⁵⁵ Rampton speaks of the ways that crossing integrates with local peer group cultures, and he concludes that crossing is generally “facilitated by some quite extensively shared orientations, practices, and standards” (498). As such, readers cannot dismiss the underlying sense of racial rejection here, as it seems that this is the most common orientation in the Raggastani’s peer group culture. While giving readers a description of the Raggastani, the narrator pauses to tell us that, “People had fucked with Rajik back in the days when he was into chess and wore V-necks. People had fucked with Ranil, when we sat at the back of the class and carefully copied all teachers’ comments into his book. People had fucked with Dipesh and Hifan when they wore traditional dress in the playground. People had fucked with Millat, with his tight jeans and his white rock. But no one fucked with any of them anymore because they looked like trouble. They looked like trouble in stereo” (192-193).

that he is very much aware of his own levels of performativity—by providing a performance within his own performance, when he “spread[s] his legs like Elvis,” “slap[s] his wallet down on the counter,” and imitates the voice of a nonnative English speaker when he asks the ticket man, “Speaka da English?” (191).

Rampton’s research clearly illustrates the ways that subjects use language crossing to demonstrate, in part, peer group membership. He notes how “responses to [...] switches [...] are] usually quite enthusiastic” and are generally met with “acclaim” from members of the peer group (494). We see a fictional version of this take place in the way that Millat’s Crew encourages (‘Liberties!’ ‘He’s cussin’ you, yeah?’ ‘You better tell ‘im,’ [191]) Millat’s multilingual tirade, “snigger[ing] and shuffl[ing] behind him, joining in on the *yeahs* like some kind of backing group” (191).

The language crossing that transpires within the childhood games played by Magid, Millat, and Irie also confirms many of the assumptions outlined above concerning multiracial peer group dynamics. The use of games throughout *White Teeth* is also important, however, in that it speaks to Rampton’s larger point: that language crossing generally occurs in adolescents whenever “routine assumptions about ordinary life [are] temporarily relaxed, suspended or jeopardized” (500). Indeed, as Victor Turner has argued, game-playing is encapsulated in an arena where there exists an “agreed relaxation of routine interaction’s rules and constraints” (Rampton 500). Once we are aware of this, then, the novel’s two distinct moments of game-like contest become quite significant.

I will simply call the first game that Magid, Millat, and Irie play the *Shame Game*. The children begin to play this game, as they ride the bus that will take them to deliver

their Harvest Day baskets to Mr. J.P. Hamilton, the racist pensioner previously mentioned. When Millat realizes that both he and Irie have brought apples for Mr. Hamilton, he insults Irie by calling her a “chief” (“North London slang, meaning *fool*, *arse*, *wanker*, a loser of the most colossal proportions” [137]). Irie then attempts to retaliate by mentioning that her basket is full of Jamaican staples: “*more* and *better* apples, *akchully*, and some Kendal mint cake and some ackee and saltfish” (137). At this, Millat begins the game of jocular exchange:

“I *hate* ackee and saltfish.”

“Who said *you* were eating it?”

“I do not *want* to.”

“Well, you’re not *going* to.”

“Well, good, ‘cos I do not *want* to.”

“Well, good, ‘cos I wouldn’t let you even if you *wanted* to.”

“Well, that’s lucky ‘cos I *do not*. So *shame*,” said Millat; and [...] he delivered shame, as was traditionally the way, by dragging his palm along Irie’s forehead. “*Shame* in the *brain*.”

“Well, *akchully*, do not worry ‘cos you’re not going to get it—”

“Oooh, feel the heat, *feel the heat!*” squealed Magid, rubbing his little palm in. “You been shamed, man!”

“*Akchully*, I am not shamed, *you’re* shamed ‘cos it’s for Mr. J.P. Hamilton—” [...]

“Shame, shame, know your name,” trilled Magid. The three of them hurtled down the stairs and off the bus (137).

As the lines in this scene build upon each other in a crescendo of dialogue, Irie finds herself in a linguistic trap from which she cannot emerge. With each line that she

delivers, her responses get longer and less effective in the face of Millat's quick wit and timely distribution of 'shame.' Thus, from the moment Millat terms her a "chief," Irie begins to cross from her native Creole-infused Cockney to an over-articulated use of language generally associated with the King's English. Christian Mair notes that in Irie's repeated use of the word *akchully*, readers are to be "reminded of the function of *actually* as a class-specific disjunct in British English" (237). Mair goes on to conclude that, from her usage, readers "can instantly gauge Irie's social aspirations," although he notes that her pronunciation is clearly out of step with her aspirations (237). While Mair's observations are certainly coherent, it seems much more accurate to note that Irie's pronunciation and aspirations are out of line, because she is not using her speech in this scene in order to falsely portray herself as a member of upper class London; instead, she is using the relaxed environment of the game to test—even to create—a racial and linguistic identity that is Othered from her own. In short, she is using the voice that her Caribbean-born grandmother, Hortense, reserves "for pastors and white women" (33); through her "overcompensation of all the consonants (33)" in the words she emphasizes ("more," "better," "wanted," and "akchully"), Irie crosses into heightened English and, thus, attempts to repair her loss of face (137).

The reason such an attempt ultimately fails is that while Irie crosses into heightened English, Magid and Millat cross into a Creole-based street slang—a language commensurate in contemporary London with urban credibility and aggressive

masculinity—in order to deliver ‘shame’ upon Irie’s head.⁵⁶ Admittedly, while it is sometimes difficult to distinguish Creole from the local multiracial vernacular of the London presented in *White Teeth*, there is evidence to suggest that we must read many of Magid’s proclamations—“You been shamed, man!” for example—as Creole (137). I say this because, throughout the scene, the twins engage in a very performative type of rhyming: “*Shame in the brain*,” Millat says; “Shame, shame, know your name,” counters Magid (137). At the formalist level, Zadie Smith is very careful with her use of rhyme throughout the novel, and it is strategically employed either in relation to the rants of the Caribbean-born Mad Mary or here, in the *Shame Game* played by Magid and Millat. In both usages, its resonances with repetition, parallel phrases, and oral speech remain distinctly Creole-based, and both encounters employ the rhyming couplet to lodge an insult. The narrator’s comment that Mad Mary’s rhyming is presented almost like a performance (“This was delivered in a kind of singing, state-whisper, accompanied by a dance from side to side, arms outstretched and Hoodoo stick resting firmly underneath Poppy Burt-Jones’s chin” [148]) again parallels the actions of Millat and Magid throughout the *Shame Game*. We are told that Millat “drag[s] his palm along Irie’s forehead” before delivering his rhymed insult, “*Shame in the brain*,” and Magid rubs his palms together repeating the phrase, “feel the heat, *feel the heat*” in an attempt to reinforce the burn—the insult—that the twins have successfully delivered upon Irie.

The second game with which the trio occupies themselves takes place moments after the *Shame Game* and is instituted by Irie, who is still feeling “the irritable hot sting

⁵⁶ It seems significant that Millat openly rejects the Jamaican staples of ackee and saltfish Irie offers (“I *hate* ackee and saltfish,” he tells her), yet he willingly takes on the language of Jamaican Creole in order to deliver shame upon Irie’s head.

of shame” (140). She thus “want[s] a rematch” and begins what the narrator calls “the practice of taxing” (140). In this game, “one lays claim, like a newly arrived colonizer, to items in [the] street that do not belong to you” (140). So, for example, Irie begins the rematch by declaring “Tax that” when she sees a “rather beat-up motorbike” (140). “Tax that, and that,” she goes on to say when she sees “two BMXs beside it” (140). In this way, the game begins, and “Millat and Magid [jump] into action” (140):

“*Cha*, man! Believe, I do not *want* to tax dat crap,” said Millat with the Jamaican accent that all kids, whatever their nationality, used to express scorn. “I tax *dat*,” he said, pointing out an admittedly impressive small, shiny, red MG about to turn the corner. “And *dat*!” he cried, getting there just before Magid as a BMW whizzed past. “Man, you *know* I tax that,” he said to Magid, who offered no dispute. “*Blatantly*.”

Irie, a little dejected by this turn of events, turned her eyes from the road to the floor, where she was suddenly struck by a flash of inspiration.

“I tax *those*!”

Magid and Millat stopped and looked in awe at the perfectly white Nikes that were now in Irie’s possession (with one red tick, one blue; so beautiful, as Millat later remarked, it made you want to kill yourself), though to the naked eye they appeared to be walking toward Queens Park attached to a tall natty-dread black kid.

Millat nodded grudgingly. “Respect to *that*. I wish I’d seed dem.”
 “Tax!” said Magid suddenly, pushing his grubby finger up against the glass of a shop window in the direction of a four-foot-long chemistry set with an aging TV personality’s face on the front.

He thumped the window. “Wow! I tax that!”

A brief silence ensued.

“You tax *that*?” asked Millat, incredulous. “*That*? You tax a chemistry set?”

Before poor Magid knew where he was, two palms made a ferocious slap on his forehead, and were doing much rubbing for good measure [...].

“*Shame! Shame! Know your name!*” (140-141).

Many of the critical elements regarding language crossing in the *Shame Game* apply to the *taxing* competition. Magid, for instance, still relies on a version of Jamaican Creole to call out Irie’s impropriety (“*Cha, man! Believe, I do not want to tax dat crap*” [140]), and, as such, it first appears as though Irie will ultimately lose this match as well; we are told, after all, that Irie is “a little dejected by this turn of events” (140). Ultimately, however, Irie secures her victory by aligning herself—as Magid did in the *Shame Game*—with black street culture through her desire to ‘own’ the Nikes that belong, in reality, to the “tall natty-dread black kid” walking toward the park (140).⁵⁷

It is notable that while Millat actually employs language crossing to win the *Shame Game*, in the *taxing* competition, Irie wins—and yet, she does not cross. It is clear through the context provided that Irie is very much interested in engaging with the language of the street, although she does not use the familiar Creole expression “tax ‘dat” (as Millat does) when she spots an object she desires. Rather, in a moment that shows her status as a second-generation immigrant, she uses the proper English phrase, “Tax that [...] tax that, and that” instead of, what would be for her—the one player in the game of actual Caribbean descent—the more *authentic* usage of “tax ‘dat” (140). Because Irie seeks to possess the Nikes—an emblem, in this case, of black British culture—and Magid desires the “four-foot-long chemistry set,” she emerges as the clear winner; for in Millat’s eyes, she has street credibility on her side (140). Millat thus, crosses into a highly

⁵⁷ The implication seems to be here that black street culture rates higher, in contemporary London, than the ethnic identities of immigrant populations. Such a reading is supported by Christian Mair’s analysis of black British English in the article “Language, code, and symbol: The changing roles of Jamaican Creole in diaspora communities.” Tracey Walter’s “We’re All English Now Mate Like It or Lump It”: The Black/Britishness of Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*” also takes up this issue.

stylized form of Caribbean Creole—but not before offering a subtle nod to Irie’s use of proper English (“Respect to *that*”)—and does so, in effect, to welcome Irie into his crew: “Respect to *that*. I wish I’d seed dem” (140).

The third platform Rampton identifies as a space upon which individuals can cross without conflict has to do with performance art. I briefly noted in my discussion of Millat and the ticketman, that—while crossing—Millat engages in a rather entertaining performance in order to mark himself as a member of the Raggastani and thereby separate himself and his Crew from white British adolescents (represented in the novel by Joshua Chalfen). I take the time to review the performativity of Millat’s comical exchange, because it speaks to my awareness of the performance of authenticity and ethnic identity within the two crossing platforms previously discussed. I have chosen to separate the instances of performance art from the previous two platforms, however, because: (1) Rampton specifically identifies performance art as one of the most distinct platforms upon which language crossing can take place, and (2) the previous performances tend to exist on the nonverbal level (through posture, gesture, action, and so on), and it is important to note that Zadie Smith provides very distinct *linguistic* performances throughout the work to make clear the connection between speech identity and show, between performativity and authenticity.

We first encounter a highly performative scene of language crossing when Clara and Alsana encounter each other during the first few weeks of their association. Clara is outside with her husband, Archie, and she waves Alsana over “before [Alsana] could cross over once more to avoid her” (54). We read:

“Mrs. Iqbal!” said Clara, waving her over.

“Mrs. Jones” [...].

“Now, is not that strange, Archie?” said Clara, filling in all her consonants. She was already some way to losing her accent and she liked to work on it at every opportunity [...].

“It’s just that we were just talking about you—you’re coming to dinner tonight, yes?”

Black people are often friendly, thought Alsana, smiling at Clara, and adding this fact subconsciously to the short “pro” side of the pro and con list she had on the black girl [...].

“Yes, Samad mentioned it,” said Alsana, though Samad had not.

Clara beamed. “Good...good!”

There was a pause. Neither could think of what to say. They both looked downward.

“Those shoes look truly comfortable,” said Clara.

“Yes. Yes. I do a lot of walking, you see. And with this—” She patted her stomach.

“You’re pregnant?” said Clara, surprised. “Pickney, you so small me kyant even see it.”

Clara blushed the moment after she had spoken; she always dropped into the vernacular when she was excited or pleased about something. Alsana just smiled pleasantly, unsure what she had said (55).

The layers of performativity are stacked rather deep in this scene. Clara begins the exchange by crossing from her native Creole into Standard English, “filling in all her consonants” and “losing her accent” in order to gain Alsana’s favor (55). Alsana is performing at least a basic tolerance of black people, and when she makes a mental note of what she perceives to be Clara’s one redeeming quality (her friendliness), the narrator

tells us that Clara is a “lucky individual” who has been “given Alsana’s golden reprieve”; which is to say, Clara has been “magically extrapolated from [her skin] like [a] Beijing tiger” (55).

Both women are, indeed, pretending to be greater friends than they are, and we see this played out at the level of social decorum: When Alsana advances following Clara’s call, Clara mentions to Archie “now is not that strange [...], we were just talking about you” when, in fact, we have no evidence to suggest that this is the case; Alsana lies to Clara, telling her that she has been informed of the dinner invitation that evening, when, in fact, she has not; Clara turns to a meaningless conversation of Alsana’s footwear, when it becomes clear that the two no longer have anything to discuss; Alsana responds to Clara’s verbal advances with a “forced hilarity”; and both women laugh at the assumption that their “husbands [do not] tell each other anything,” when they both realize “that it was they themselves who were kept in the dark” (55). Yet, at the cursory level, none of this is immediately apparent, until Smith boldly juxtaposes the cant of this scene with Clara’s own over-articulated use of Standard English. When Clara finds herself thrilled for Alsana’s pregnancy, her speech deteriorates into Creole (“Pickney, you so small me kyant even see it” [55]), and, tellingly, the final moment of this most performative scene is ultimately nonperformative.

Indeed, because Smith employs such a sharp juxtaposition to show the performativity of language between the two women, readers naturally draw a parallel between Clara’s crossing and the social performance underlying much of the relationship between Alsana and Clara. The reason this scene works, however—and perhaps more

importantly, the reason the relationship between Alsana and Clara is eventually able to thrive—is because both women are very much aware of the performance taking place and of the characters they are playing.⁵⁸

As a way to contextualize certain performances, Rampton draws upon the specific example of “the formulaic use of song,” which he believes signals to all involved that the crossing is sometimes meant to be “ritual and jocular” (500). Zadie Smith does not infuse song lyrics into the diversity of language within her novel, although I think one could certainly claim that her use of movie lines (or references to film, in general) serves much the same purpose. The fact that Rampton would draw from his field research the lightheartedness implied in one’s use of song (or, in Smith’s case, film) is very interesting to me, as throughout Smith’s novel, we actually see a reversal of this taking place.

Millat Iqbal is the one character from whom we hear the most movie lines recited.⁵⁹ We know that Millat’s inner monologue runs through his head in Paul Sorvino’s voice—“*Great, supwoib, so we all know each other [...] Now let’s get down to business,*” he hears himself thinking, when he walks in upon the meeting of his mother

⁵⁸ Alsana and Clara (and, to some extent, Millat and the Raggastani) are not the only personalities within the novel to perform a character within their character. The principled and obedient Joshua Chalfen, for example, takes the blame when Irie is busted for marijuana possession by the school authorities. Wanting to be seen as a “Ghetto-boy” (despite the fact that he’s upper middle class, white, and Jewish) in the eyes of Millat and Irie, Josh borrows from the jargon of the streets (251): “Some of it was my marijuana. I was dealing marijuana. Then the pigs jumped me (250). And Ryan Topps seeks favor with the Jehovah’s Witnesses by speaking in a voice that is “Cockney yet refined, a voice that has had much work done upon it—missing key consonants and adding others where they were never meant to be, and all delivered through the nose with only the slightest help from the mouth” (321).

⁵⁹ Ryan Topps (who quotes *Star Wars* [421]) and Archie Jones (who offers a dying man his last request because, “he’d seen the movies” [443]) also revert to the recitation of movie lines in order to convince themselves of their own seriousness when forced to take a stand at Marcus Chalfen’s lecture. I have not included these characters in this larger discussion, however, because these instances do not occur during moments of crossing.

and Joyce Chalfen (369)—and that whenever he finds himself conflicted about his association with the fundamentalist Muslim association, KEVIN (The Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation), his language mirrors that of mafia movies. Millat cannot reconcile the fact that his love of “gangster” movies, particularly of the “Mafia genre,” aligns him with “*the moribund, decadent, degenerate, oversexed, violent state of Western capitalist culture and the logical endpoint of its obsession with personal freedoms*” (368). And he cannot stop himself from repeating the introductory line of *GoodFellas* each time he opens a door—“a car door, a car trunk, the door of KEVIN’s meeting hall, or the door of his own house” (368):

“As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster” (368).⁶⁰

We know that Millat attempts to take his association with KEVIN seriously (he is constantly reading the group’s literature, and the narrator tells us that Millat “knew that he was KEVIN’s big experiment, and he wanted to give it his best shot” [365]), although he has a difficult time actually gaining the group’s full fellowship (he tries, but ultimately refuses, to break from his highly sexualized—and Westernized—girlfriend, and he finds himself “at a loss” whenever he tries to “get his head around” the group’s written instructions [379]).

What is more, while the more devout members of KEVIN speak in a very elaborate and elegant English (the narrator tells us that, when Hifan speaks, “one word [flows] from another, with no punctuation or breath [,] and with [his] chocolatey delivery—one could almost climb into his sentences, one could almost fall asleep in

⁶⁰ According to the narrator, Millat “even saw [this phrase] like that, in that font, like on the movie poster” (368).

them” [244]), Millat still prefers to cross into the language of the streets when engaging with this group: “Seriously, Hifan, man, you look wicked. Crisp” (245).

Given Millat’s divided loyalties between KEVIN and the Raggastani—two groups with deeply different messages, intents, and even languages—he turns to the recitation of movie lines in order to convince himself of the serious nature of his Muslim fundamentalism and of his involvement with KEVIN. In linguistic terms, Millat is doing what most language crossers do: he is borrowing from the language—in this case the idiomatic expressions—that circulates around him in order to perform a new identity and to negotiate the boundaries of that identity.⁶¹ Which is to say, Millat asserts his identity as a member of KEVIN by adopting the verbiage of *Goodfellas*’s Henry Hill (“As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster” [368]). In Millat’s mind, such an assertion grants him an element of credibility, and this is of particular importance given that, aside from the other members of KEVIN, no other character takes this group very seriously: “Those green bow-tied bastards,” Alsana remarks, “Millat is high up with them now. Very involved. [...] They call themselves followers of Islam, but they are nothing but thugs in a gang roaming Kilburn like all the other lunatics” (365). In short, when Millat is representing himself as a member of KEVIN, he borrows from—and, by extension, crosses into—the language of mafia movies in order to convince both himself and others of his own involvement with some type of criminal counterculture.

As previously mentioned, Millat’s crossing in this sense initially appears to work against Rampton’s findings, which indicate that the use of song (or, in Smith’s case, film)

⁶¹ I am making the argument that Millat’s mobspeak is contained within the English “language,” though in this sense, it takes on the form of idiom or parlance. Indeed, as this argument shows, I see the dynamics of dialect and language and idiom crossing as the same.

signals a playful, almost humorous, exchange. A final example, however, serves to elucidate the point that while Millat actually takes these moments of crossing quite seriously—and ultimately uses the language of film to grant himself a degree of gangster credibility—those around him do, indeed, recognize the hilarity of his crossing in this regard.

Toward the end of Chapter Seventeen, Millat is in his upstairs bedroom, attempting to read Brother Hifan’s pamphlet “concerning the act of prostration (leaflet: *Correct Worship*)” (379). Millat, however, never makes it through the end of the written instructions: “He was in a cold sweat from trying to recall all that was halal or haraam, fard or sunnat, makruh-tahrima (prohibited with much stress) or mikruh-tanziki (prohibited, but to a lesser degree)” (380). The narrator tells us that,

At a loss, he had ripped off his T-shirt, tied a series of belts at angles over his spectacular upper body, stood in front of the mirror, and practiced a different, easier routine, one he knew in intimate detail:

*You lookin’ at me? You lookin’ at me?
Well, who the fuck else are you looking at, huh?
I cannot see anybody else in here.
You lookin’ at me?*

He was in the swing of it, revealing his invisible sliding guns and knives to the wardrobe, when Irie walked in.

“Yes,” said Irie, as she stood there sheepish. “I am looking at you” (380).

As Millat crosses over into the language of Travis Bickle, from Martin Scorsese’s 1976 film, *Taxi Driver* (*You lookin’ at me? You lookin’ at me?* [380]), it becomes obvious to readers that he is using this communicative code to convince himself of the significance of his association with KEVIN’s particular brand of criminality. Millat finds it nearly

impossible to translate KEVIN's instructions ("It is either fard or wajib to put two feet or at least one toe of each foot on the ground [...]. That is, if two feet are not put on the ground, namaz will either not be accepted or it will become makruh" [380]), and so, "at a loss," he turns to something "easier" and crosses into mobspeak (380). While Millat personally believes that crossing in this way marks his affiliation with KEVIN (when it is over, Millat grabs "his prayer mat and [points] it toward the Kaba, ensuring the mat was no higher than floor level, resting on no books or shoes, his fingers closed and pointing to the quibla in line with his ears ..." [381]), Irie actually confirms Rampton's findings by recognizing the absurdity of the performance and responding with the humorous retort, "Yes,[...] I am looking at you" (380).

For Rampton, language crossing involves a "distinct sense of movement across social or ethnic boundaries," and, in so doing, it brings into focus questions of legitimacy which all crossers must ultimately acknowledge (485). Christian Mair looks at the use of Jamaican Creole within the Black British Community and concludes that crossing into this particular linguistic territory is a "high-risk strategy for outsiders," in that,

[P]redictably, black users [tend] to view such behavior with great hostility—either for the simple reason that they [feel] the mickey [is] being taken out of them, or in more sophisticated analysis, that the use of Creole by [outsiders devalues] a code whose very *raison d'être* [is] to affirm black ethnicity. In Bourdieu's term, whites using black English constitute[s] a particularly pernicious raid on young blacks' precarious store of symbolic capital (233).

Even though Irie, who is of Caribbean descent, does not speak Creole in favor of a more stylized form of English (remember her repeated use of the word, *akchully*), there is some evidence to suggest that she is not comfortable with Millat adopting a Jamaican identity

at certain points in the novel. Rampton speaks of this in terms of a “tension” that tends to exist when crossers come to “disregard” the very real boundaries of race and ethnicity (501-502).

We see this, for example, when the Jones and Iqbal families meet to watch on television the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and Millat offers—in Creole—an unsolicited commentary of the event: “What they want [...] is to stop pissing around wid dis hammer business and jus’ get some Sementex and blow de djam ting up, if they do not like it, you get me? Be quicker, innit?” (198). The scene continues:

“Why do you talk like that?” snapped Irie, devouring a dumpling. “That’s not your voice. You sound ridiculous!”

“And you want to watch dem dumplings,” said Millat, patting his belly. “Big ain’t beautiful” (198).

This exchange speaks to the questions of legitimacy Rampton addresses, for Irie makes clear that Millat has no authentic claims to Creole when she openly accuses him of speaking in a borrowed “voice” (198). Perhaps the reason Irie takes such offense to Millat’s crossing is that, at this moment, Millat breaks all of the unspoken codes for crossers. In Rampton’s words, in order for the crossing to be effective, language-crossing adolescents must show

[S]ensitivity to the different ethnic backgrounds of their friends [...] by **not** crossing in certain contexts (avoidance). Black and white adolescents seldom [use] stylized Indian English to **target** Panjabi friends, and most whites and Panjabis either [avoid] Creole or [use] it in very circumscribed ways when they [a]re in the company of black peers. [Also], crossing generally only occur[s] in moments, activities, and relationships in which the constraints of ordinary social order [are] relaxed (500).

Based on Rampton's assertions here, we can understand precisely why Irie feels affronted—for Millat blatantly goes against the two “general strategies” Rampton outlines for amicable adolescent crossing (500): Millat does not show the proper sensitivity to Irie and her ethnic background by avoiding Creole in this context, and his breach is made most apparent by the fact that he does not cross upon one of the socially sanctioned platforms outlined in detail above (in responding to a perceived injustice; in games, joke, or jest; or in a performance art). Irie thus appropriately calls attention to this disruption, and her response takes the normally suave Millat off his mark; accordingly, his only recourse is to retaliate, and, again in Creole, he attacks. This time, he goes after Irie's weight: “And you want to watch dem dumplings,” he says, “big ain't beautiful” (198).

Language crossing aside for a moment, the exchange here between Irie and Millat speaks, on a larger level, to the linguistic anxieties manifested throughout the work. We know, for example, that Samad is a walking paradox: he is an Indian immigrant intent on raising his sons in the tradition of the east; and yet, when it comes to his English usage, he is, what Christian Mair calls, “an uncompromising linguistic conservative” (238). Samad's sensibilities are offended when (1) he hears the English tongue distorted, and (2) he is forced to distort the language himself. We can only assume that this sting comes from his knowledge that—as an immigrant—he is judged by his language use. While Samad is committed to eastern philosophies and customs, he clearly wants the opportunities that come from the West, and, thus, he chooses to speak the King's English—a language he presumably believes to be the more refined tongue. We see him

question, for instance, the British-born Poppy Burt-Jones as to her use of the phrase “So what?”—“What kind of phrase is this: ‘So what?’ Is that English? That is not English. Only the immigrants can speak the Queen’s English these days” (151)—and Millat accuses him of adding an air of sophistication to his speech, when he refers to the fall of the Berlin Wall as “an historic occasion”: “Stop sayin’ ‘an historic,’” says Millat, “Why cannot you just say ‘a,’ like everybody else, man? Why d’you always have to be so la-di-da?” (200). As Mair notes, Samad is also “pained by the fact that he has to switch into Cockney to get a fellow Asian’s [Abdul-Mickey’s] attention (238): “Samad raised his hand and turned to the counter. ‘Abdul-Mickey!’ he yelled, his voice assuming a slight, comic, Cockney twinge. ‘Over here, my guvnor, please’” (159).

That Samad would speak in Cockney while conversing with Abdul-Mickey is rather appropriate, for Abdul-Mickey is the novel’s most convincing representation of Cockney (he uses phrases like “I says to ‘im,” and “it’s the majority wot counts, innit” [159]) even though, ironically, he is of Arab descent. Like Samad, Abdul-Mickey is also aware of the judgments and opportunities that come from one’s spoken language, and, thus, he reacts harshly when he hears Magid (Samad’s son who was raised and educated in India) speaking in a very elaborated and stylized Standard English:

‘Speaks fuckin’ nice, do not he? Sounds like a right fuckin’ Olivier. Queen’s fucking English and no mistake. What a nice fella. You’re the kind of clientele I could do wiv in here, Magid, let me tell you. Civilized and that. And do not you worry about my skin, it do not get anywhere near the food and it do not give me much trouble. Cor, what a gentleman. You do feel like you should watch your mouth around him, dontcha?’ (371).

Abdul-Mickey’s excessive expletives in this paragraph, his self-deprecating remarks concerning his own skin condition, and his references to both Queen Elisabeth and the

illustrious British actor Sir Lawrence Olivier, clearly proclaim the insincerity of his elaborate praise. Abdul-Mickey mocks Magid’s language when he begins to feel that his own strong Cockney is suddenly substandard. Such a reaction, at least in the context of *White Teeth*, is quite appropriate, as Smith continues to show us how nonstandard dialects—both ethnic dialects and Cockney—fail to hold overt prestige within the London of the novel. Abdul-Mickey thus perceives an element of highbrow culture and education within Magid’s Standard English, and this, therefore, suggests an undertone of social inferiority within his own dialect Cockney.

That both Samad and Abdul-Mickey—indeed, all of the characters within this novel—harbor a sense of linguistic anxiety is not surprising, as they absolutely recognize the ways that language use signals one’s class and ethnic status. It is almost as though the characters throughout the novel are living the absurdity of the experience that takes place when Irie barges into her parents’ bedroom one evening and discovers—through Clara’s unintelligible speech—that her mother’s upper set of teeth are prosthetic:

“Irie? Wha—? Iss sa middle of sa nice...Go back koo bed...” [...]

“I want to talk to [you] Mum,” said Irie firmly [...].

“Irie, please...I am exhausted...I am shrying koo gesh shome shleep.”

[...]

“[...] Mum? Can you please sit up and speak properly? I am trying to talk to you? It seems like I am talking to myself here?” said Irie with absurd intonations, for this was the year Antipodean soap operas were teaching a generation of English kids to phrase everything as a question [...] “I want to see how other people live!” [...].

“An’ gek youshelf killed in da proshes! Why don’ you go necksh door, dere are uvver people dere. Go shee how dey live!” [...].

In the darkness, Irie kicked over a glass [...]. Then, as the last of the water ran away, Irie had the strange and horrid sensation that she was being bitten [...] Irie looked down to where the pain was [...]. The front set of some false teeth, with no mouth attached to it, was bearing down upon her right foot [...].

“Shatishfied?” asked Clara wearily. (It wasn’t that she had deliberately not told her. There just never seemed a good time) (313-314).

Much of the humor in this scene comes from Clara’s inarticulate pronunciations, and, as such, these toothless expressions prove the ways that accent, intonation, and elocution can signal some type of difference, some type of oddity, to outside listeners. Irie recognizes the peculiarity of her mother’s speech (“sit up and speak properly,” she tells Clara [313]), although there is no way that she can recognize the larger implications taking place: implications which suggest that the borrowed tongue of the immigrant will continually be heard as imperfect to native English speakers, implications that tell us that someone without teeth is really someone without “roots”—and that someone without roots is necessarily uncertain and insecure about their position in society, particularly when their external environment continues to privilege white Western culture over the colored Orient.⁶²

Indeed, while Tracey Walters claims that the diversity of language within Smith’s novel works “to underscore the hybridisation of society [and to demonstrate] that specific speech patterns are not relegated to a single ethnic group,” such a response is far too simplistic and totally inaccurate when measured against Rampton’s findings concerning one’s ability to cross into another language—and the conditions under which such

⁶² For an excellent discussion concerning the metaphoric role of teeth and roots within Smith’s novel, see Molly Thompson’s “Happy Multicultural Land”? The Implications of an “excess of belonging” in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*.”

borrowings occur (317). Ultimately the implications associated with Clara's toothless exchange seem to be what the language dynamics within *White Teeth* are all about: first- and second-generation immigrants engaging in language crossing and endeavoring to borrow from the linguistic traits of other languages in an attempt to establish their place within the multiculturalism of the text. Yet Smith masterfully shows what Rampton's studies confirm so well: "that in crossing, hardly anyone finally arrive[s]" (Rampton 506). According to Rampton, while the potential for movement in and among cultural and peer groups does exist, such movement is ultimately limited in that language crossers are only able to cross in certain "moments, activities, and relationships in which the constraints of ordinary social order [a]re relaxed" (500). He thus concludes that "inherited ethnicity" seems to be something that is continually "treated as a basic feature of routine social reality," and, in this way, it would be improper to view language crossing "as a runaway deconstruction of ethnicity" (501).

With this in mind, Walter's simplistic argument—that "the cultural hybridisation of English society [within *White Teeth* makes] concepts of ethnicity and race indeterminate" (315)—becomes exposed to the reality of the characters, each of whom feels "an ever present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere" (*White Teeth* 225). Such feelings, Molly Thompson notes, are understandable, for "despite the fact that societies are 'open, porous formations' with many 'overlaps, borrowings and two-way influences,' the novel implies that the osmotic process of transculturation in Britain is not evenly balanced" (130). She continues:

Homi Bhabha concurs with this, suggesting that there is an unequal relationship between different groups in Britain. Because host societies or dominant cultures set up what he terms a “transparent norm” that implies “that these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid,” an oppression of certain values will occur. As a result, cultural diversity is *permitted*, but cultural difference is always *contained* within the ‘grid’ of the dominant (host) society (130).

The continual typecasting that takes place throughout the novel “reinforces the fact that the dominant belief systems remain firmly in place in England and that society is often unwilling to be open to alternatives” (Thompson 130). “We are divided people, aren’t we?” Samad asks Mad Mary, as he looks around and begins to survey the “smelly bustle of black, white, brown, and yellow shuffling up and down the High Street” (149). Such a stance is directly counter to the views of scholars, such as Walters, who maintain that, within Smith’s novel, “racial homogeneity is on the verge of extinction” (316). “Accept it [...] we’re all English now, mate” is the advice that Abdul-Mickey gives to Samad as he begins to bemoan his sons’ Western upbringing; and yet, the novel provides little evidence to suggest that the native English characters share in this vision of “happy multiculturalism” (160, 384). On the contrary, Smith dots her text with racist remarks precisely to debunk this utopian ideology: “If you ask me, they should all go back to their own,” an angry pensioner announces to a bus full of passengers (137); “*Bloody Pakis*” Alsana’s neighbor shouts at her (167). The message behind these rants is clear to those on the periphery, and Samad articulates the position of the immigrant very nicely when he says of England, “Cold, wet, miserable; terrible food, dreadful newspapers—who would want to stay? In a place where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated. Like you are an animal finally housebroken” (336).

Smith's novel reveals to us the complex language dynamics that exist among individuals forced to straddle two different, conflicting cultures. And, while she permits colloquial Creole to sit alongside idiomatic Cockney at the table of linguistic diversity, she is also very much aware of the racial tensions, the cultural ideologies, and the contemporary linguistic practices that continue to trouble this very possibility.

CHAPTER 7

CODA

If we are to respond to the present exigence in the humanities concerning multi-modal methodologies and work toward some type of collaboration between linguists and literary scholars—between formal novelistic concerns and the linguistic landscape in which a work was composed—we must, as Christian Mair notes, confront a few basic issues. In his article, “A Methodological Framework for Research on the Use of Nonstandard Languages,” Mair outlines different standards that must be met if an interdisciplinary approach is to be used to evaluate the representations of language within a literary work.

According to Mair, literary scholars must approach this type of collaboration by first acknowledging two fundamental principles. Initially, literary scholars must analyze literary dialects by systematically comparing them with the “real thing” in order to “establish points of contact and points of deviation between life and art” (“Methodological” 105). Which is to say, scholars need to inform themselves concerning the “real” languages that are played out within a narrative’s account in order to react appropriately to the author’s representation of that language in literature. An example from this dissertation would be my analysis of orality within Igbo speech patterns, which allows me to conclude that, through Achebe’s narrative technique, such orality is actually

harbored and preserved within the narrative structure of *Things Fall Apart*. This type of linguistic approach to literary studies will, in the words of Mair, “at least create an awareness that in order to understand culturally remote texts not only their historical and social background, but also their linguistic substrate needs to be researched” (Mair, “Methodological” 105).

Mair then claims that, in order to understand the overall effect of various linguistic strategies within a literary work, literary scholars must subsequently research the “sociology of language and language attitudes” (Mair 107). Such an awareness can help scholars determine, for example, whether comic or lower-class characters are being ridiculed by the types of language they use, or whether a “covert prestige” exists in the expressions of individual subgroups (think here of my discussion of Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*, and the power relations I examine when Smith’s characters of Bengali descent “cross over” into the street slang of Jamaican Creole). From a literary perspective, then, the aim would be to study the use of language (often nonstandard language) as a stylistic device or rhetorical tool in literature.

Linguists, on the other hand, should approach such a collaborative project through something Mair refers to as the “sociolinguistics of literature,” where the literary text actually becomes the object of study from a sociolinguistic point of view (“Methodological” 108). Mair asserts that, like the literary scholars before him, the linguist’s task is twofold:

- a) To establish the basics (where necessary), i.e., to determine what type of nonstandard language is represented to what degree of faithfulness and, more importantly, to provide information on language use and attitudes conventionally associated with these varieties;

- b) To draw attention to the generic and collective (as opposed to individual) styles that enter the literary work through the inclusion of nonstandard speech. How an author handles the written literary standard of his time and place is largely his personal creative achievement. Nonstandard language is different; the very decision to transpose it into the written medium is stylistically significant. In the new context normal nonstandard vocabulary may be (mis?)read as exotic and poetic metaphor [...], idiomatic phrases are patterned on those of other languages [...], and—most difficult for the uninitiated to detect—entire verbal exchanges may be re-enactments of communicative routines absent from mainstream culture and should not be directly credited to an individual author's creative genius (108-109).

From this charge, we might conclude that the linguist should try to understand the deeper contextual and sociological meanings of each utterance; literary critic Robert Scholes goes one step further, claiming that the linguist might approach the literary text as “the product of a person or persons, at a given point in human history, in a given form of discourse, taking its meanings from the interpretive gestures of individual readers using the grammatical, semantic, and cultural codes available to them” (16). In other words, in addition to the sociological meanings behind a work, linguists must also account for the circumstances that inform its production. Taking this dissertation as a case study, for example, the linguist would wish to approach my discussion of the orality in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through the context of verbal, call-and-response exchanges in precolonial African societies. Or, to provide another example, the linguist might want to recognize that Zadie Smith's masterful use of language crossing in *White Teeth* actually does little more than re-enact the verbal exchanges prominent in inoffensive ritual-insult games played in youth groups to establish and maintain group solidarity. To credit such scenes to Smith's creative genius would be inappropriate, as Mair notes, for the trained

linguist should be able to recognize that Smith has simply recontextualized various types of nonstandard language into the written medium. For the linguist to find success in the sociolinguistics of literature, he must recognize that language has as much to do with social context as it does with the actual words and exchanges on the page. N.F. Blake speaks to this in his work *Nonstandard Language in English Literature*, when he writes:

The use of nonstandard varieties of the language in literature is likely to remain a significant tool in the writer's kit, but how it is exploited remains to some extent outside his control, for it depends upon a wider attitude to language in the society in which he lives (199).

The point, as Cynthia Bernstein notes, is that “linguists do not consider language exclusive of context”; as such, in order to apply linguistic study to literary criticism, linguists must be able “to relate language to the social, historical, cultural, political, and psychological contexts of writer and reader” (2).

Interdisciplinary efforts by linguists and literary scholars are necessary, I argue, to the study of postcolonial literature, in that they allow us to not only disengage from the comfort of the metropolitan center, but also to present clearly and systematically aspects of the use of language that have, for far too long, been overlooked or neglected. Such an approach, as this dissertation has shown, should be integrated with related ideas in postcolonial studies and literary theory (including Bakhtin's concept of “heteroglossia,” Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the “third space of enunciation,” Derrida's process of *itérabilité*, and so on) in order to aid scholars in recreating what Bakhtin imagines as the “third dimension” of language in the novel (qtd. in Mair, “Methodological” 111).

As this dissertation has shown, this type of literary sociolinguistics has the potential to lead to a greater understanding of the varieties of language used within a text

and produces clearer descriptions of the conscious rhetorical and narrative strategies employed by different authors. While the sampling of chapters presented here by no means exhausts the potential of linguistics to inform literary criticism, the arguments presented do, I hope, provide a detailed glimpse of what purposes language variety can serve in fiction; of how these languages interact with other constitutive elements of textual organization, literary theory, linguistic research, and postcolonial studies; and how sociolinguistic conventions can lead literary scholars to a deeper understanding of the “style” and ‘structure” of fictional postcolonial prose.

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CURRICULUM VITA

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Education:

Ph.D., British and American Literature.

University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 2011.

M.A., English. Wake Forest University, 2005.

B.A., English. Westminster College, Salt Lake City, 2002.

B.A., Communication. Westminster College, Salt Lake City, 2002.

Doctoral Dissertation:

Dissertation title: "Colonial Language and Postcolonial Linguistic Hybridity"

Directed by: Professor Vincent Cheng

Committee members: Craig Dworkin, Jay Jordan, Nadja Durbach

Research Interests:

Postcolonial fiction and poetry.

Modernist studies (prose and poetry, interrelationships among the arts).

Minority discourse and its differences in race, class, ethnicity, gender, and region.

Literature and its relationship to linguistics.

Orality and its relationship to print.

Courses Taught and Developed:

ENGL 3780: Global Transnational Literature

ENGL 3710: Studies in Modernism

ENGL 3703: Introduction to Literary History III: From the Romantics to the Moderns

ENGL 3600: Introduction to Critical Theory

ENGL 2600: Introduction to Literary Forms

WRTG 3011: Writing for the Arts and Humanities

WRTG 2010: Intermediate Writing: Writing for Academic and Public Discourses

WRTG 2010: W.W. Norton & Co. Test Class:

Writing with the Norton Field Guide Portfolio Space

Online Courses Taught and Developed:

WRTG 3011: Writing for the Arts and Humanities

Honors/Awards/Fellowships:

University of Utah, Clarence Snow/Sherman Brown Neff Fellowship, 2010-2011.
 University of Utah, Graduate Teaching Assistantship, 2005-2010.
 Salt Lake Magazine's *Best of the Beehive Award* in teaching, 2007 (nominee).
 Wake Forest University Summer Research Grant, 2004.
 Graduate Scholarship, Wake Forest University, 2003-2005.
 Presidential Scholarship, Westminster College, 1998-2002.

Scholarly Publications:

Here Lies Lalo: The Collected Works of Abelardo Delgado. Houston: Arte Público, 2011.

“‘He does not understand our customs’: Narrating Orality and Empire in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46.1 (2010). 65-75.

“Language Shift in Brian Friel’s *Translations*: ‘The Self is Perceived as Otherness.’” *Interventions: Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. (Under review.)

Editorial Publications:

“Environment: The Human Dimension of Global Change.” *G8 Summit Priorities Magazine*: Sea Island, Georgia (2004), 34-40.

“100 Years of Aviation: Bringing the Resources and the Resourceful Together.” *G8 Summit Priorities Magazine*: Evian, France (2003) 34-38.

“Building a New Partnership for Africa’s Development.” *G8 Summit Priorities Magazine*: Kananaskis, Canada (2002), 31-34.

“Promoting a Universal Primary Education.” *G8 Summit Priorities Magazine*: Kananaskis, Canada (2002), 39-40.

“Picabo Street.” *Welcome 2002*. Prestige Publications, 2001. 54-57.

“Winter Olympic Games 2002.” *Welcome 2002*. Prestige Publications, 2001. 56-66.

Papers and Presentations:

“Language Shift in Brian Friel’s *Translations*: ‘The Self is Perceived as Otherness.’”
 Modern
 Language Association Convention, January 2011. Panel on Attitudes toward Language Change.

“El Abuelito.” Lalo Delgado Poetry Festival. Metropolitan State College of Denver, 2009.

“He does not understand our customs”: Narrating Orality and Empire in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. *Metamorphoses: An International Colloquium on Narrative and Folklore*. University of Utah, 2008.

“Sanctifying Orality in the Print Public Sphere: A Discursive Reading of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*.” *Confutati: Fragments of Vision and the Mosaic of Meaning*. University of Utah, 2007.

“Comm(unity?) in *The Bluest Eye* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.” *SMLA*. Emory University, 2006.

“(De)Centralizing Identities in Toni Morrison’s *Sula*.” *New Dimensions in Critical Theory: The Borders, Territories, and Frontiers Conference*. University of Arizona, 2004.

“The Fallacy of Reality in DeLillo’s Fiction.” *National Undergraduate Literature Conference*. Weber State University, 2003.

“Sympathy for the Wife of Bath.” *National Undergraduate Literature Conference*. Weber State University, 2002.

Books Copy-Edited:

McPherson, Brian J and Eric Sundquist, eds. *The Science and Technology of Carbon Sequestration, AGU Monograph Series*. Washington D.C.: American Geophysical Union, 2008.

Gilreath, Shannon. *Sexual Politics*. Akron: University of Akron Press, 2006.

Tolman, Anton. *Depression in Adults: Latest Diagnostic and Treatment Strategies*. Kansas City: Compact Clinicals, 2005.

Suppes, Trisha. *Bipolar Disorder: Treatment and Management*. Kansas City: Compact Clinicals, 2005.

Connors, Keith. *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*. Kansas City: Compact Clinicals, 2005.

Academic Service:

Academic Appeals Committee Member, College of Humanities, University of Utah, 2007-present.

Business Writing Consultant, David Eccles School of Business, University of Utah, 2006–2010.

Graduate Student Association (GSA) representative, Wake Forest University, 2003-2005.

References:

Vincent Cheng, University of Utah

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Placement File:

A complete dossier is available through Interfolio, Inc. and the University of Utah's Career Services.