

“The other”

The Significance of the Signifier

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the literary, cultural and psychological landscape of the “the other”, as the phenomenon has prevailed throughout human history, in varying forms and functions. Employing postcolonial theories (emphasizing the writings of Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha) alongside works of fiction, the thesis seeks to explore four instances of stereotyping.

Focusing my efforts on the powers which *enable* the concept, I attempt to prove the validity of a hypothesis, wherein the concept of “othering” is linked to the colonial *forces*, rather than the colonized *subjects*. Consequently, through the aid of two short stories – “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” and “The Catch” – and two novels – *Robinson Crusoe* and *A Passage to India* – this dissertation endeavours to link the differing instances of “othering” together into a single cohesive truth.

Acknowledgements

I will begin by expressing my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Jakob Lothe. I must first and foremost thank Professor Lothe for being the original inspiration behind this thesis, through “Colonial and Postcolonial Literature”, introducing me to a field of study which I have grown to enjoy immensely. Secondly, I would like to convey my appreciation for his advice and continued guidance, as well as for the unique opportunities he has offered me, ultimately proving invaluable to the creation of this text.

Finally, I must acknowledge the affection and support given me by my parents, throughout the writing of this thesis. Furthermore, I deem it necessary to apologize to my father for altering his perception of certain literary classics from his childhood, and voice my gratitude for the patience and eternal kindness of my mother.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

During the spring semester of 2009, I was fortunate enough to be able to partake in the seminar “ENG2321 – Colonial and Postcolonial Literature”, which, among other things, provided an introduction into the phenomena that is the “the other”. The structure, which initially seemed to describe the relationship of two primary components, soon revealed substantial intricacies, by virtue of the inherent rhetoric of political and cultural power structures which dictated the reality of said components. The concept, as it appears within colonial and postcolonial literature, describes the way in which a dominant signifying force effectively determines the nature, and thus the fate of a subject people, within the perimeters of the imperial project.

However, even in the aftermath of this course, the concept continued to rear its ugly yet fascinating head, describing elements of queer theory, gender studies and Shakespeare. Ultimately, both by virtue of being taught by inspiring teachers, as well as being personally captivated by this particular subject, I came to the conclusion that I would like this field of study to be the topic of a potential master thesis. I find the concept of “othering” a topic worthy of exploration, the notion of stereotyping describing not only a literary, but historical, cultural and psychological aspect of human reality.

The intention behind this initial chapter is to present a comprehensive overview of my thesis as a whole. I will begin by presenting my problem statement, followed by a brief introduction to the writers and texts, and the postcolonial theories, on which I base my later literary analysis, in relation to the construct that is “the other”. In addition, there will be a description of my method of work, as well as an outline of the structure of the thesis as a whole.

This thesis will investigate the hypothesis that the concept of “the other” originates within the “self”, rather than the stereotype, and as such, quite possibly more concerned with the character of the *signifier*, than the identity of the *signified*. The definitions of these concepts will be provided in the section “Theory and Terminology” of this chapter. I will, argue that the act of “othering” constitutes an artificial, human construct, first and foremost associated with a psychological disposition, rather than an actual, physical reality. Do we as human beings require an “other”?

I will also attempt to uncover a common trait within the collective conduct of the signifiers, despite a difference in context. I seek to discover which strategies are made use of by the colonizing forces in order to ensure the desired outcome. Which factors continue to characterize the meeting of “self” and “other”, and does the arrangement in itself in any way prove damaging to the signifiers as well as the signified? Furthermore, do all signifiers constitute a single segment, operating in the same manner?

Texts and Authors

Nadine Gordimer and “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” and “The Catch”

Exhibiting an extraordinary literary talent, Nadine Gordimer proceeded to publish her first short story at the mere age of 15,¹ and was in 1991 awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The author herself identified the production of fiction as an organic and highly personal endeavour. Addressing the creation of her first novel, first attempted in her late teens but not accomplished until age twenty five,² Gordimer expressed a belief that in order to depict life through art, one must first have life experience:

¹ Margaret Walters, ‘Writers in Conversation: Nadine Gordimer’, in *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Nancy Topping Bazin, Marilyn Dallman Seymour and Peggy Whitman Preshaw (London and Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), pp. 285-298 (p.285).

² *Ibid.*, pp.287-288.

I hadn't lived enough. Perhaps that's a limitation of my own experience; but I felt my life was rally too narrow, and emotionally it was too constricted for me to be able to write a novel. Whereas there were small striking incidents, things that could be contained, you know, like an egg. A short story's like an egg: it's all there. Whereas as novel [...] it's an unknown territory that's staked out, and it can take time to move from one part of the territory to another.³

Over time her appreciation of literature combined with a deep desire for social and political reform. For the writer came to recognize and consequently articulate the apparent ethnic duality within South-African society, wherein certain voices privileged above others, noting the basic privileges granted her own person over those of black origins.⁴ In Gordimer's opinion, both literary and culturally, the future of South Africa required a healthy blending of Afrikaaner and native culture and experiences – “a hybridization of influences”.⁵

The two short stories chosen to be explored in this thesis depict two instances of contact across the racial divide, and ultimately the unsettling results of the Apartheid regime. The first text, “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” portrays an encounter between a white woman and a black man, in which the latter attempts to steal the woman's purse, inflicting an acute sense of terror in her, causing her to flee. However, in the aftermath of the event she ponders her own previous actions. The second text, “The Catch” relates the event in which a Caucasian couple encounter an Indian fisherman while on vacation, entertaining a superficial acquaintance with the man, only to finally reject him when reunited with their friends.

Introduced to, and consequently intrigued by, the novel *My Son's Story* (1990) as part of my final high school examination in oral English, Gordimer's writings later served as my first encounter with “othering” outside the reams of postcolonial theory, solidifying my understanding of the concept, and as such I find it a natural inclusion in my thesis. Despite

³ Ibid.,

⁴ Dominic Head, ‘Gordimer and South Africa: Themes, Issues and Literary Identity’, in *Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Abiola Irele (New York and Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-33(p.1).

⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

being highly critical of the artificial construction that is apartheid, the author idealizes neither the native nor white populations, entertaining no absolutes regarding human nature, and ultimately demands nothing of her audience beyond a willingness to interpret.

E.M. Forster and *A Passage to India*

Having published five novels during his lifetime, as well as several works posthumously, E. M. Forster was hailed by Lionel Trilling as “the only living novelist who can be read again and again and who, after each reading, gives me what few writers can give us after our first days of novel-reading, the sensation of having learned something.”⁶ Forster himself, however, did not seek fame or greatness, and refused to lend his trust to what he identified as the impotent construct of political ideology, which in his mind bred animosity and power abuse.⁷ Thus, the author retained a certain scepticism about the imperial project, believing it damaging to both rulers and subjects.⁸ As a result, his texts

state the general conflict which is located in the political conflict of today. His themes are the breaking down of barriers: between white and black, between class and class, between man and woman, between art and life. ‘Only connect...’ the motto of *Howards End*, might be the motto of all his work.⁹

Despite experiencing an undeniable literary success, *A Passage to India* marked Forster’s last contribution to the realm of the novel in his lifetime.¹⁰ The remainder of his life was instead

⁶ Lionel Trilling, ‘Introduction: Forster and the Liberal Imagination’, in *E.M. Forster*, 2nd edn (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1965), pp. 7-24(p.7), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 18 October 2011]

⁷ Lionel Trilling, ‘Introduction: Forster and the Liberal Imagination’, p.9, and Sunil Kumar Sarker, ‘Forster: The Man and Some of His Views’, in ‘*E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India*’ (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd, 2007), pp. 117-147(pp. 127-128), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 07 April 2011]

⁸ Andrew Rutherford, ‘Introduction’, in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Passage to India – A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1970), pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

⁹ Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise* (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1938), p.7.

¹⁰ David Bradshaw, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, ed. by David Bradshaw (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-7 (p. 1).

devoted to the production and presentation of lectures, essays and reviews establishing an international reputation as one of the most capable intellectuals of his time.¹¹

A Passage to India gives a fictional description of the destructive British colonization of India, wherein two cultures appear incompatible, through the fates of British tourists Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, as well the native Dr. Aziz. Thus, Forster portrays the sudden and painful act of “othering”, which appears in the wake of benevolent interaction. Overall, the novel arguably provides a bridge between certain aspects of the short stories discussed in the initial chapter and the novel *Robinson Crusoe* considered in the fourth chapter.

Daniel Defoe and *The Life & Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*

Though undeniably a force of narrative innovation, Daniel Defoe did not distinguish in the minds of readers until his later years (and after an eventual refashioning of his surname), through a production of controversial literary texts. Significantly versatile in terms of his professional life, among other things working as a government agent as well as a commentator on English politics for *The Review*, Defoe published works on most areas of human culture through the course of his life.¹² Concerned with a wide variety of fields, Defoe devoted himself to matters of history, religion, geography and commerce. In a manner reminiscent of his famous character Robinson Crusoe, he sought to master all skills necessary for his professional projects to flourish.¹³

Defoe’s writing has rich local contexts and particular occasions; it is always involved in religious, political, economic, and moral controversies of the day, and we do know enough about his life to call it an adventure, a picaresque tale,

¹¹ Ibid.,

¹² Patrick Parrinder, ‘Cross-Grained Crusoe: Defoe and the Contradictions of Englishness’, in *Nation & Novel - The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 63-81 (p. 66).

¹³ Ibid.,

almost, of strife and struggle in the commercial, political, and literary arena of his time.¹⁴

By the early 1720s Defoe had begun to publish original and creative texts, among other things producing a series of full-length novels and imaginative documentaries.¹⁵ Nevertheless, his greatest accomplishment remains the narratively ingenious text, *The Life & Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, whose protagonist is often defined as the essential Englishman.¹⁶ The novel relates the experiences of titular character Robinson Crusoe, as he is forced to rebuild his very existence upon becoming stranded on a pacific island for a period of 28 years. The plot further depicts Crusoe's efforts to cultivate and colonize the island, as well as his eventual master-servant relationship with the native Friday, before finally culminating in an opportunity for the protagonist to return to his native home.

Having encountered the novel within the contexts of narrative theory, as well as colonial and postcolonial literature, I have developed a complex relationship with the text in question. For the novel is both the subject of my fascination and admiration, as well as the recipient of a significant amount of repulsion, provoked by its infantile notions of race and cultural correspondence. Still, I ultimately found it necessary to include the text in the body of my thesis, because of its considerable contribution to the field of literature and colonialism. Innovative in both form and structure, *Robinson Crusoe* has proven to be an originator of the modern English novel, as well as greatly influenced by, and in turn exerting influence on the colonial and imperial project. In addition, I recognized that in order to fully comprehend the subject of my chosen project, I must devote attention to a text which did not wish to alter or critique the binary opposition of the stereotype, but instead advocated it.

¹⁴ John Richetti, 'Preface', in *The Life of Daniel Defoe – A Critical Biography*, ed. by Claude Rawson (Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. vi-ix (p. viii).

¹⁵ Pat Rogers, 'Introduction', in *Daniel Defoe – The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Pat Rogers (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-30 (p. 7), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 16 October 2011]

¹⁶ Parrinder, 'Cross-Grained Crusoe: Defoe and the Contradictions of Englishness', p. 63.

Terminology and Theory

Before proceeding to discuss the relevant theory which will be drawn from, I believe it prudent to allow insight into the terminology which will be employed throughout the course of this thesis. As is natural, I will begin by defining the central and continuously recurring term of “the other”. When speaking of the concept within a colonial and postcolonial context, I am referring to a non-Caucasian segment, not necessarily considered human, whose person incorporates all the negative qualities which it’s opposite, the Caucasian “self”, does not.

The white “self”, by virtue of its European heritage, takes on the role of *the signifier*, determining reality in its own favour. However, the inherent threat posed by the signifying forces lie in the fact that in order to accomplish their goal; they must define not only their *own* identity and fate, but also that of their designated counterparts. As a result, those who do not share their ancestry are perceived as beings of lesser value – “others” – and becoming *the signified*.

Still, “[h]ow does one *represent* other cultures? What is *another* culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the ‘other’)?”¹⁷

Critics have argued that the very structure of human civilizations requires the construction of subjective hierarchies, in which there exists an “other”.¹⁸ Supposedly, the foundation of all cultural units depends upon a brutal method of social, cultural and racial classification, a concept retaining “its identity in semiotic systems only if other units are represented as foreign or ‘*other*’ through representing a hierarchical dualism in which the unit

¹⁷ Edward W. Said, ‘Orientalism Now’, in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 201-328 (p. 325).

¹⁸ Lawrence E. Cahoon, ‘Introduction’, in *From Modernism to Postmodernism – an Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence E. Cahoon, Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies, 2nd edn (Malden, Oxford, Victoria and Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 1-14 (p. 11), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 11 September 2011]

is *privileged* or favored while the other is *deprivileged* or devalued in some way.”¹⁹ What has, in fact, allowed this damaging notion to prevail throughout the human history? Is “the other” simply the inferior party in a power relationship? Such a definition hardly seems sufficient; surely there must be some additional factor deeply ingrained in this process.

Philosophers Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Johann Gottlieb Fichte theorized that within the psyche of every human being, the very sense of self contains a binary opposition. In a process referred to as “self-othering”,²⁰ Fichte and Hegel describe the self as continually struggling with an alien part of itself, manifested in a divided psyche, wherein the unsatisfying mental component is deemed “Other”. Perhaps the act of stereotyping, as presented by colonial narratives, originated from a need to transfer onto another the lesser qualities found within oneself?

By virtue of the efforts of literary theorist Edward W. Said (1935-2003), however, the academic Western conscience was granted a novel opportunity to gain insight into the area of postcolonial phenomenon and theory, and thus, intimate details regarding “the other”.²¹ (Likewise, my own understanding of “the other” originated within the theories of Edward Said, and consequently, constitutes the point where I choose to begin when attempting to convey the phenomena of stereotyping.) As a result, I find that the motivations of “othering” are certainly not of a purely logical nature, but rather influenced by powerful emotions and instinctual reactions.

Through his book *Orientalism* (1978), as well as later texts, Said describes the ways in which political, cultural and social realities couple with elaborate imperial and colonial fantasies. Imperialism as an institution is associated with the operations, theory and general

¹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰ Robert R. Williams, ‘Between Kant and Fichte’, in *Recognition – Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 27-47 (p. 42).

²¹ Peter Childs, ‘Introduction: Colonial History, National Identity and “English” Literature’, in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 1-31 (p. 1).

persuasion of a national force, generating complex power structures.²² The resulting colonialism, by means of invasion and conquest, effectively realizes the agenda of imperialism, exercising dominating power over foreign territories.²³

Said further describes the concept of Orientalism, portraying a binary opposition, consisting of powerful Western forces (characterized through the empires of Britain, France and America)²⁴ which dominate weaker Eastern counterparts. “[N]either the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability;” Said concludes, “each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other.”²⁵ This situation was the result of quest, undertaken with the intention of generating a faulty representation of the so-called “Orient”, in order to enable conquest.

The geographical use of the term ‘Orient’ itself, flattens a vast and varied terrain into flat cartographic dimensions. Lost in its folds are the thousands of different cultures which have at one time or another made up the different lands of Asia and the Middle East. Everything distant and exotic, everything different and singular was buried beneath the term ‘Orient’.²⁶

“The Orient” consequently grew to become essentially a work of fiction, at once possessing fertile territories and exotic delights, as well as blasphemous, unenlightened, filthy brutes and dangerous, perversely sexualized beings (signs of progress, loyalty, structure and moral strategically ignored, or possibly not even perceived). Ultimately, the overall, cultural, social and ethnic inferiority of “the Orient” made its native inhabitants unfit (if not undeserving) to rule their nation, the colonizing forces viewing their conquest as of a quite necessary, if not benevolent, nature.

²² Edward W. Said, ‘Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories’, in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 3-61 (p. 8).

²³ *Ibid.*,

²⁴ Edward W. Said, ‘Introduction’, in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 1-28 (p. 15).

²⁵ Edward W. Said, ‘Preface 2003’, in *Orientalism* (London: The Penguin Group, 2003), pp. xi-xxv (p. xviii)

²⁶ Piyel Haldar, ‘Plato and Orientalism’, in *Law Orientalism and Postcolonialism – The Jurisdiction of the Lotus Eater* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 27-52 (p. 47), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 21 March 2011]

This overall perception inevitably “promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, ‘them’).”²⁷ The dogma of Orientalism presented a simple and quite logical reality:

There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power.²⁸

The peoples over whom the Westerners ruled, however, proved significantly more complex. For “the other”, though the result of false and cruel premises nevertheless constitutes an ambivalent creation: its operations and psychology are depicted in great detail, yet it remains a shadow; strange, terrifying and ultimately alien.

Scientific and intellectual pursuits into the essence of Orientalism unfortunately failed to mend the situation. Operating under the imperial agenda, such efforts proved instead counterproductive, producing only further bastardizations of the East; the “true” Orient which they sought, a notion based entirely on false premises.²⁹ Although, the term does indeed refer to a physical territory, it does not describe a physical *reality*.

However, the danger lay not in the misinterpretation itself, but rather the intention which propelled it. “My whole point about this system,” argued Said, “is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence [...] but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting.”³⁰ Still, Said remained steadfast in his belief that the realities of human

²⁷ Edward W. Said, ‘Knowing the Oriental [1979]’, in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, ed. by Paul A. Erickson & Liam D. Murphy, 3rd edn (Ontario and New York: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2010), pp. 392-405 (p. 401), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 05 September 2011]

²⁸ Edward W. Said, ‘The Scope of Orientalism’, in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 31-110 (p. 36).

²⁹ Said, ‘Introduction’, pp. 22-23.

³⁰ Said ‘Orientalism Now’, p. 273.

societies *could* in fact be explored and satisfactorily comprehended, when studied alongside literary culture – an endeavour which this thesis will embrace.³¹

Yet the concept of binary oppositions as examined by Said is not a single, isolated occurrence, but a historical tendency. The notion extends further than simply the relationship between “Orient” and “Occident”, encompassing a general separation between the conquering nations and their counterparts.

All great nations in the fullness of their strength have desired to set their mark upon barbarian lands. All over the globe to-day we see the peoples of Europe creating a mighty aristocracy of the white races. Those who do not share in this great rivalry will play a pitiable part in time to come. The colonizing impulse has become a vital question for a great nation.³²

The ancient Greeks defined non-Greeks as “barbaros”, referring to the manner in which they supposedly spoke in unintelligible phrases, and therefore could not be comprehended. Similarly, the Chinese civilization identified all those on non-Chinese heritage, across the ocean as “Yang-kwei”, effectively naming them sea monsters.³³ “The myths of many tribes and peoples include a belief that only we are human, the members of our clan, our society, and that Others – all Others – are subhuman, or not human at all.”³⁴ In fact, the established strength of a society was suggested to be in direct correspondence to its instinctive, xenophobic, and arguably narcissistic, tendencies.³⁵

³¹ Said, ‘Introduction’, p.27.

³² Heinrich von Treitschke, ‘The Rise and Fall of States’, in *Politics*, trans. by Blanche Dugdale and Torben De Bille, 2 vols (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1916), pp. 107-133 (pp. 115-116.)

³³ Ryszard Kapuściński, ‘The Other in the Global Village’, in *The Other* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), pp. 63-75 (pp. 73-74).

³⁴ Ryszard Kapuściński, ‘Encountering the Other as the Challenge of the Twenty-First Century’, in *The Other* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), pp. 77-92 (p. 83).

³⁵ Ryszard Kapuściński, ‘The Viennese Lectures’, in *The Other* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), pp. 11-49 (p. 44).

Yet, did not the Christian doctrine of the infamous European conquerors state that all Men were created equal under God?³⁶ This may once have been the case, but the colonizing powers argued that the darker skin tones of the colonized peoples reflected an internal corruption, and an overall deviation from the path of Christianity.³⁷ Obviously a matter subject to some interpretation, it would seem that any remnant of this aforementioned equality lay in the granting to each race a specific role which to exercise. As a result, the prevailing colonial and imperial argument dictated that the darker races were suited to manual labour, service and slavery, while Caucasians formed a master race of rulers and administrators.³⁸

This, of course, was no natural order, but instead the result of manmade – or, rather *white* – order. “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,” explains Homi Bhabha, “—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.”³⁹ Colonial conquest, by virtue of its nature, proceeded to oversimplify matters relating to coloured civilizations, misinterpreting and severely disturbing their overall existence.⁴⁰ Portraying an assumed sense of superiority, the colonizers, through aid of military and economic power, annihilate the economic, legal, political and social structures of the conquered nations without hesitation, enforcing instead their own structure.⁴¹

The full monstrosity and absolute absurdity of the colonial mindset, and the resulting “other”, are insightfully depicted in the novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) by South-

³⁶ Ania Loomba, ‘Colonial and Postcolonial Identities’, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, ed. by John Drakakis, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), pp. 91-153 (p. 92)

³⁷ Ania Loomba, ‘Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies’, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, ed. by John Drakakis, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), pp. 7-90 (p. 64).

³⁸ Ernest Renan, quoted in Loomba, ‘Colonial and Postcolonial Identities’, p. 109.

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, ‘The Negro and Language’, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 8-27 (p. 9).

⁴⁰ Frantz Fanon, ‘On National Culture’, in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory – A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 36-52 (p. 45).

⁴¹ Abdul R. JanMohamed, ‘The Economy of Manichean Allegory’, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 19-23 (p. 20), in *Google Books* <http://books.google.com/> [accessed 21 September 2011]

African writer John Maxwell Coetzee (1940-). The text in question portrays a scenario in which a tribe of nomadic fishermen are perceived as savage barbarians, who must be hunted down in order to protect an unknown, possibly British, Empire. Displaying signs of a decidedly “inhuman psychology”,⁴² representatives of the Empire brutalize their prisoners, effectively revealing the qualities which they claimed to be found in the so-called “barbarians”.

The text illustrates a prudent fact, namely that “the other” was very much a preconceived concept. The nature and consequently necessary treatment of their coloured counterpart appears bred into the psyche of the colonizers prior to ever meeting any of their colonized subjects. The prevailing image of the “other” which existed in the minds of the colonizing European races referred to a primitive, savage and ungodly creature, whose ultimate humiliation and suppression were simply a result of a natural order, and consequently the duty and privilege of the Caucasian conqueror.⁴³ Overall, this apparent dismissal of a world shared equally amongst the human races, however, is ultimately joined by an immature desire to dominate in order to control the difference which threatens.⁴⁴

Yet, *some* degree of insight into the dehumanizing monstrosity which they were committing must have presented itself to the conquering nations. Considering the psychological component evident in the colonial pursuit, it has been suggested that “the difficulties of Englishmen abroad” were a direct result of their supposedly “undeveloped hearts”.⁴⁵ It was not the case, however, that the English *lacked* compassion, but rather that,

⁴² Fanon, ‘The Negro and Language’, p. 20.

⁴³ Kapuściński, ‘The Viennese Lectures’, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Octave Mannoni, ‘Crusoe and Prospero’, in *Prospero and Caliban – The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. by Pamela Powesland, 2nd edn (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990), pp. 97-109 (p. 108), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 17 September 2011]

⁴⁵ E.M. Forster, ‘Notes on the English Character’, (1926) pp. 1-8 (p. 2), in *Scribd* <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/14248355/Notes-on-the-English-Character-by-EM-Forster?query=hearts>> [accessed 17 June 2011]

out of a seemingly paralyzing fear, they *chose* not to feel (possibly because doing so would threaten the foundation on which they based their domination).⁴⁶

Of course, the colonial project, through which foreign nations were conquered and made to submit to European rule, was also a matter of adventure and glory. The institution of colonialism granted new, fertile terrain, but also the opportunity to assert the superiority of the White Man over his darker counterparts, as well as that of the masculine over that of the feminine. Continents proceeded to be associated with female identities, and their inevitable conquest at the hands of the White Man, with sexual encounters. “America” (1589), by artist Johannes Stradanus provides sexualized vision of the discovery of America, in which the explorer, Amerigo Vespucci, encounters the continent in the form of an eagerly awaiting nude woman, the colonist himself arguably functioning as the embodiment of knowledge and power.⁴⁷ Ultimately, brutal and bloody conquests were translated as inspirational, love stories.⁴⁸

I find, however, that even in the aftermath of the imperial, and consequently colonial, project, the perception which enabled the existence of such gruesome proceedings remains very much intact within the core of human civilizations. Arguably, the difficulty lies, not in the designated roles of colonist or the subject races, but in the psychological, manmade distance which invokes the respective roles and continues to separate them.⁴⁹ As such, the subject must not be suppressed, abandoned as a shameful aspect of human interaction, but rather, as suggested by Edward Said, investigated and deciphered through the use of literature. It is only through gaining a comprehension of the inherent dread and desire, which

⁴⁶ Ibid.,

⁴⁷ Susanne Zantop, ‘Domesticating the Other: European Colonial Fantasies: 1770-1830’, in *Encountering the Other(s) – Studies in Literature, History and Culture*, ed. by Gisela Brinkler-Gabler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 269-283 (p. 272).

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 274.

⁴⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Foreword to the 1986 Edition’, in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. xxi-xxxvii (p. xxviii).

characterizes the need for an “other”, that we can ever hope to abolish the continued invocation of a homogenized stereotype.⁵⁰

Methodology:

This thesis will first and foremost discuss works of fiction, though incorporating central postcolonial theories, in order to exemplify my arguments, drawing primarily from the theoretical writings of Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha. Aided by two short stories and two novels, “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”, “The Catch”, *A Passage to India* and *Robinson Crusoe* I will analyze four separate instances of interaction in which the act of “othering” is displayed. Differing in terms of time, geography and length, these interactions will range from a brief, non-verbal encounter, to a relationship sustained over the course of many years. I will begin by discussing the aforementioned interactions in their briefest form, as portrayed by the two short stories, and gradually move to explore the relationship depicted in the novels, as it grows ever more complex.

Specification of Problem Statement

Ultimately, the thesis will seek to provide a basic deconstruction of the notion of the colonial “other”, by examining the nature and implications attached to the concept, as perceived through the eyes of the signifier. I will attempt to decipher the phenomena of stereotyping as it appears within colonial and postcolonial literature, emphasizing the cognitive patterns of the colonizing forces, potentially locating one or more common traits, and recognizing the process as more closely associated with the signifier than the signified.

⁵⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative’, in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), pp. 57-93 (p. 75).

Outline of Chapters

Overall, in terms of basic structure, the thesis will consist of five chapters; an introduction, followed by an analytic main body and finally a conclusion. The shortest in length, this initial chapter aims not only to provide a basic introduction to my thesis as a whole, but also to give an overview of the theories which I will employ throughout the following chapters, as well as the historical roots associated with the subject, hopefully providing readers with a deeper understanding of my chosen topic.

Functioning as base occurrences of stereotyping “Is there Nowhere Else We Can Meet?” and “The Catch”, arguably present the most basic, direct and, vicious examples of “othering” portrayed in the thesis. Chapter 2 will attempt to explore the former text as one based purely on instinct and assumption, void of genuine communication, verbal or otherwise, ultimately entertaining the possibility of two different outcomes. The latter short story, “The Catch”, however, presents the conscious, strategic circumstances surrounding the racial conflict. What similarities exist between these two “others”, and furthermore, in which fashion has the institution of apartheid contributed to the two occurrences portrayed?

The third chapter will provide a literary analysis of E.M Forster’s *A Passage to India*, a novel where signifier and signified initially engage in something akin to a positive social relationship, based on polite curiosity and friendship. The chapter will focus primarily on the central characters of Adela Quested, Mrs. Moore and Dr. Aziz. I will examine the relationship of the characters prior to, and in the aftermath of, the two women’s experience in the Marabar Caves, through which their mutual relationship with Aziz disintegrates, finally reducing the physician to the state of “other”. Could in fact the instinctual terror associated with “the other” be a wholly separate occurrence?

Overall, the thesis will describe the differences between the colonizing forces and colonized people, exemplified through the relationship between native Indian and Anglo-

Indians, but also that of men and women. For what *are* the roles of the fairer sex in relation to the colonial agenda? In addition, the existence of a potentially inescapable event through which the initially benevolent disposition of the British signifiers is forever altered will be briefly addressed.

The intention of the penultimate chapter (the longest of the five), is an exploration into the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* – the originator of the modern novel, and a formidable source of colonial literature – in terms of not only the protagonist’s relationship with the character of Friday. I will discuss the plot perceived as a reconstruction of identity, wherein the protagonist seeks to civilize, and consequently cultivate, his immediate surroundings, culminating in the creation of an “other”. This fourth chapter will describe the characteristic of the original colonial “other”, as it appears within the text, from which all previous examples have descended. The subject of ownership in relation to Crusoe’s claiming of the island as his own, as well as the colonial agenda in general will be touched upon. How could Crusoe justify his authority?

These four chapters will be followed by a conclusion in which I shall endeavour to sum up my findings, attempting to view them from a critical perspective, and, if necessary, modify or redefine my original hypothesis.

Chapter 2

Two Short Stories by Nadine Gordimer

Introduction: Nadine Gordimer

The purpose of this second chapter is to gain insight into the process of “othering”, through an exploration of the concept in, arguably, two of its most disturbingly raw, but also clear and concise forms. This task will be accomplished by analysing the creation of stereotyping, as it occurs within the two texts: “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” and “The Catch”, by South African writer Nadine Gordimer (1923-). I will focus primarily on the mindset of the signifier, and the circumstances through which “the other” is conceived.

Published in 1952, early in Gordimer’s literary career, as part of the short story collection *The Soft Voice of the Serpent and Other Stories*, the texts reveal a distinct social and literary structure, which has come to be closely associated with Gordimer. For, throughout the pages of her published works, readers are able to discern a common theme, namely the construction and consequences of apartheid. The institution of apartheid constitutes a political construct, advocating the separation of racial groups, justified by a flawed perception of Africans as substantially inferior to the white race.⁵¹ By virtue of its nature, readers are able to perceive the programme as closely tied to the creation of an “other”.

In Gordimer’s eyes, such a concept was repulsive, since she found attempts to deny racial identity in any fashion equal to a denial of humanity.⁵² Still, her first and foremost goal as a writer was not to seek racial retribution, or idealization of the black community. Rather,

⁵¹ Dominic Head, ‘Preface’, in *Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Abiola Irele (New York and Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. xi-xiii (p. xi).

⁵² Sunita Sinha, ‘Nadine Gordimer: Post-Colonial Study of “Racism and The Realm of the Other” in Nadine Gordimer’s Fiction’, in *Post-Colonial Women Writers – New Perspectives* (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd., 2008), pp. 74-86 (p. 76), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 17 January 2011]

she seeks a perpetual examination of truth and the nature of power relations, emphasizing the mental and bodily realities of South African life.⁵³

Within Gordimer's writing style, critics have noted the existence of a certain amount of "manifest intertextuality";⁵⁴ the author's writing at times referring to other texts which concern themselves with racial and social issues, and a presentation of "the other" in some form. Some have discerned a crucial link between Gordimer's 1965 short story "The African Magician" and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), suggesting the former to be a fictional commentary, and a partial retelling, of the latter.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the author is found to incorporate irony, coupled with an "aesthetic completeness",⁵⁶ into her writing, effectively linking Gordimer to other prominent modernist writers such as Katherine Mansfield and James Joyce.⁵⁷

The Nobel prize-winning author did not enter the literary arena with the intention of being a political force. However, as South African life has become intimately tied to the flow of politics, her texts have likewise "become intimately connected with the translation of political events, of the way politics affect the lives of people."⁵⁸

Nadine Gordimer's writings function as an expression of racial unification, viewing South African literary identity, as a pursuit of a hybridized ethnic statement; a careful merger of not only literature and politics, but also of European and African civilizations. Such a blend exemplifies a unique opportunity to escape the restrictions of South African society, in which

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

⁵⁴ Dominic Head, 'The Short Stories', in *Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Abiola Irele (New York and Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 161-181 (p. 163).

⁵⁵ Ibid.,

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

⁵⁷ Ibid.,

⁵⁸ Claude Servan-Schreiber, 'Nadine Gordimer: A White African Against Apartheid', in *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Nancy Topping Bazin, Marilyn Dallman Seymour and Peggy Whitman Preshaw (London and Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), pp. 108-121 (p. 114).

the unfair limitations of apartheid, hindering different ethnic groups from socializing, prevented genuine narrative innovation.⁵⁹

Ultimately, as a woman of Western heritage, living amongst a people of colour, Gordimer holds a unique position, enabling her to perceptively observe the social political and cultural realities of her country. As a result, her works “document what the radical form of ‘othering’ did to people and their cultures. To Gordimer, understanding racism was something, universal, if one were human, one shouldn’t be able to comprehend the horrors of racism even if one hasn’t experienced it first hand.”⁶⁰

Self and “other”: “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”

Gordimer’s earliest publications revealed a narrative structure in which the author tended to rely on the consciousness of an intelligent, sensitive, often Caucasian, persona to experience encounters across the racial divide.⁶¹ “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” tells of such an encounter, chronicling the brief, but consequential meeting between a white woman and a man of colour. In theory, such a meeting might hold great potential, aiding in the formation of a genuine cultural identity through a “free and full meeting of self and other.”⁶² Unfortunately, the nature of the meeting in question is less than satisfactory, taking the form of an unfortunate encounter between two desperate individuals, rather than a beneficial joining of two cultures.

Throughout the course of the story both parties remain nameless, referred to simply by the personal pronouns, “he” and “she”, or in the case of the coloured man, “the native”. As such, their characters are stripped down to a very basic level, presented as representatives of

⁵⁹ Head, ‘Preface’, p. xii.

⁶⁰ Sinha, ‘Nadine Gordimer: A Post-Colonial Study of “Racism and the Realm of the Other” in Nadine Gordimer’s Fiction’, p. 76.

⁶¹ Christine Loflin, ‘Nadine Gordimer (November 20, 1923-)’, in *A Reader’s Companion to the Short Story in English*, ed. by Erin Fallon and others (London and Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 182-189 (p. 183).

⁶² Dominic Head, ‘Gordimer and South Africa: Themes, Issues and Literary Identity’, in *Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Abiola Irele (New York and Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-33 (p. 8).

the two ethnic groups to which they belong. Though the black man functions as a central character, the story itself is relayed completely from the viewpoint of the white female protagonist, consequently positioning her as focalizer. This, in turn suggests a subjective rather than objective account of the event in question. Overall, amongst the chosen texts subjected to analysis in my thesis, I view this short story as portraying the most basic instance “othering”, based largely on a brief interaction centred on instinct, void of genuine communication, verbal or otherwise.

The story, which at first glance may seem to simply convey an incident where “a black man pounces upon a white girl”,⁶³ is possessed of further substantial depth. Addressing “the fearsome racial mythology of physical violence”,⁶⁴ in which black men supposedly prey on white women, the short story in question is likened to the fairytale of “Little Red Riding Hood.”⁶⁵ Within this fairytale’s archetypal gallery of characters, the wolf functions as a dangerous, primitive and animalistic character, essentially different from the innocent titular character. Likewise, the native, in the mind of his female counterpart (as a direct result of a larger Western mindset), might be made to suggest exactly this – a primitive, animalistic danger:

Both Orientalism and colonialism denied subject peoples’ human agency and resistance and constructed explanatory models to account for the alterity of those subjects [...] In particular the notion of atavism – the belief that the ‘primitive’ people of Africa constituted an earlier stage of human development – often recurs: all the reference to primeval swamps, to primitive rituals, the colonial subjects’ perceived deficiency in language, intellect and culture attest to this belief.⁶⁶

⁶³ Judie Newman, ‘Jump Starts: Nadine Gordimer After Apartheid’, in *Apartheid Narratives*, ed. by Nahem Yousaf, Studies in Literature, 31 (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 101-114 (p. 107).

⁶⁴ Andrew Vogel Etti, ‘No One Knows’, in *Betrays of the Body Politic - The Literary Comments of Nadine Gordimer* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1993), pp. 100-120(?) (p. 105), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 5 February 2011]

⁶⁵ Newman, ‘Jump Starts: Nadine Gordimer After Apartheid’, p. 107.

⁶⁶ Lola Young, ‘Imperial Culture: The Primitive, the Savage and White Civilization’, in *Theories of Race and Racism - A Reader*, ed. by Les Back, John Solomos and Chris Jenks (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 267-286(?) (p. 268), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 18 January 2011]

However, as a result of these beliefs, the native man is in fact rendered an unfortunate victim, rather than a vicious, animalistic creature.⁶⁷

However, the fear which consumes the focalizer is in fact not a result of the native himself. Rather, she experiences “an abstract fear”, which I can surmise to be a learned psychological reaction. “For a moment it was Fear itself that had her by the arms, the legs, the throat;” relates Gordimer, “not fear of the man, of any single menace he might present, but Fear, absolute abstract”(Nadine Gordimer, “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”, p. 94). According to journalist Henry Woodfin Grady, this tendency is an instinctual one, transcending notions of both pride and prejudice, being “bred in the bone and blood.... Without it, there might be a breaking down of all lines of division and a thorough intermingling of whites and blacks”.⁶⁸ I tend to agree with this observation.

The perceived threat posed by the native’s presence (though his motives cannot be categorized as noble) is most likely magnified. This renders the female protagonist not so much a victim of her attacker, as of the crippling panic induced within her own mind. For “this story suggest that this archetypal scene of interracial violence may be the result of the woman’s own prejudices; at first she passes him without incident. When he comes after her and moves in front of her, he does not touch her”.⁶⁹ Her recollection and reaction of their confrontation might be influenced by her instinctual panic at his presence,⁷⁰ witnessing as the “awfulness of dreams came true” (p. 94).

With this in mind, I cannot completely disregard the notion that his intentions are simply to seek means to survive, as opposed to deliberately causing harm or fear. At this point, I can clearly discern the native appearing as an “other”; depicted as a foreign entity in

⁶⁷ Newman, ‘Jump Starts: Nadine Gordimer After Apartheid’, p. 107.

⁶⁸ Henry W. Grady, ‘In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr. Cable’, in Joel Chandler Harris, *Life of Henry W. Grady Including His Writings and Speeches* ([n.p]: Kessinger Publishing Co., 2004), pp. 285-307(?) (p. 290), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 18 February 2011]

⁶⁹ Loflin, ‘Nadine Gordimer (November 20, 1923-)’, p. 184.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*,

the eye of the white protagonist, his role and identity consequently formed and defined by this perception of him.

While not explicitly commented upon, the protagonist's fear, though largely of a *general*, instinctual nature might also be fuelled by a *specific* dread of sexual violence. Viewed as primitive and biologically inferior being, the designated "other" consequently tends to be sexualized. Though constituting a crucial subject, this particular aspect of "othering" will be further explored later on in this thesis, upon discussing the relationship between Dr. Aziz and Adela Quested.

However, the focalizer's negative reaction to the black man is, to some extent, foreshadowed through her behaviour regarding a collection of pine needles, which come to represent the physical, as well as symbolic uncleanness of the native.

It was clean, unhuman. Slightly sticky too; tacky on her fingers. She must wash them as soon as she got there. Unless her hands were quite clean, she could not lose consciousness of them, they obtruded upon her. (p. 94)

Similarly, though to a greater extent, the poor condition of the coloured man upsets her, as his presence, with its unclean state, likewise imposes on her person. The dismay at his physical presence arguably masks distaste for his supposed negative symbolic qualities.

He was standing with his back toward her, looking along the way he had come; she pricked the ball of her thumb with the needle-ends. His one trouser leg was torn off above the knee, and the back of the naked leg and half-turned heel showed the peculiarly dead, powdery black of cold [...] The eyes were red, as if he had not slept for a long time, and the strong smell of old sweat burned her nostrils. (p. 93)

Supposedly, there exists within the mind of white signifiers in instances such as this, upon encountering their coloured "others", a subconscious, infantile, and ultimately unsavoury

desire to rectify the situation, making their counterparts like themselves.⁷¹ “[T]urn White or disappear,” as Frantz Fanon so eloquently phrased it.⁷² Thereby the focalizer becomes trapped between the opposing poles of a dread of reality and a utopian fantasy.⁷³ As fantasy for obvious reasons cannot prevail, dread instead does, the white protagonist succumbing to terror and repulsion.

While saddening, her response is not surprising, as blackness has come to be associated with biological inferiority, unattractive appearance, darkness and immorality. The Caucasian skin tone on the other hand, has been made to represent the exact opposite, such as truth, morality, beauty and purity. In this manner it is made to define what it means to be sophisticated, innovative and overall human.⁷⁴

However, larger circumstances may also have influenced her reaction. For the coloured man’s presence is an unwanted one, not simply *socially*, but arguably also *geographically*. The black presence in South Africa was a fact, but by no means a right; the native population possessing no actual claims to their ancestral home.⁷⁵ Thus, in the white woman’s mind, the man has no genuine right to be in her path, fuelling her instinctual reaction of shock and fear.

Ironically, due to her natural prejudice, by which she reduces her attacker to the state of “other”, the focalizer herself is reduced to a similar state, described as an ignorant, animal-like being, robbed of rational thought and proper articulation: “Every vestige of control, of sense, of thought, went out of her as a room plunges into dark at the failure of power and she found herself whimpering like an idiot or a child. Animal sounds came out of her throat” (p. 94).

⁷¹ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Foreword to the 1986 Edition’, in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. xxi-xxxvii (p. xxxiii).

⁷² Frantz Fanon, ‘The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized Peoples’, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 61-81 (p. 75)

⁷³ Bhabha, ‘Foreword to the 1986 Edition’, p. xxxiii.

⁷⁴ Ziauddin Sardar, ‘Foreword to the 2008 Edition’, in Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. vi-xx (p. xiii).

⁷⁵ Head, ‘Preface’, p. xi.

Thus, she is a victim of duality. Supposedly made superior by virtue of a collective white supremacist mindset, she focuses on negative connotations invested in “the other”, yet rendered powerless in confrontation with “the other”, due to the very same mindset. For, “[i]f the earth had opened up in fire at her feet, if a wild beast had opened its terrible mouth to receive her, she could not have been reduced to less than she was now” (p. 94).

At this point readers would be able to note, by virtue of her dramatically negative reaction, not only the focalizer’s significant separation from the neutrality of the narrator, but the consequential difference between the views of the protagonist and Gordimer herself, producing a case of attitudinal distance.⁷⁶ For, despite their mutual background as women of Western heritage, I cannot presume the protagonist to share the author’s personal beliefs. This particular species of narrative distance “is connected with the different levels of insight of the narrator and the characters in the text”.⁷⁷ Thus the concept takes on a distinctly metaphorical aspect, associated with the subjective and vital notion of interpretation, a subject which arguably features heavily in this text.⁷⁸

However, readers have been presented with vivid, though indirect, images of the white female’s thoughts and emotions, but what of the native man’s thoughts and reactions? We find that the native’s perspective and thoughts are closed to us, neither reader nor fellow - protagonist is allowed genuine insight into the workings of his psyche. Despite his central role, the black man is effectively rendered mute. Though undoubtedly capable of such a feat, he is denied the privilege, and arguably power, of articulation his own motivations and perceptions, leaving us only the assumptions of the white woman.

⁷⁶ Jakob Lothe, ‘Narrative Communication’, in *Narrative in Fiction and Film – an Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 11-48 (p. 36), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 20 March 2011]

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*,

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization [...] A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power.⁷⁹

Yet the lack of an articulation of the threat posed in fact proves more frightening than a genuine, verbal confirmation of such a threat. For his silence effectively translates into a deafening language of potential terror within the mind of the female protagonist. Thus, ultimately, I am left to ask the question posed by Frantz Fanon, “what does a black man want?”⁸⁰

With regards to this particular individual, the reader can only surmise that he wishes to obtain the focalizer’s bag, in search of financial assistance, or perhaps nutrition, in order to aid his poor physical state. However, on a general level, the answer takes on a larger scope. For, like Fanon himself, the man most likely wishes to move beyond cultural and ethnic viewpoints and associations, consequently declaring war on colonial values.⁸¹ Thus, “the first thing that the black man wants is to say no. *No to degradation of man. No to exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom.* And, above all, *no to those who attempt to build a definition of him.*”⁸² Sadly, however, this notion is lost to the focalizer at the moment of confrontation, her own psyche successfully denying his.

Yet perhaps this fact illustrates not first and foremost a silence of behalf of the native (the signified), but rather the deafness of the *focalizer* (the signifier). For “the nuances in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized are irrelevant given the fact that the

⁷⁹ Frantz Fanon, ‘The Negro and Language’, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 8-27 (pp. 8-9).

⁸⁰ Frantz Fanon, ‘Introduction’, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp.1-7 (p.1).

⁸¹ Sardar, ‘Foreword to the 2008 Edition’, p. xvii.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

colonizer is totally deaf to the political condition of the colonized and what the colonized has to say.”⁸³

If we likewise pursue a more general view, not only into the mind of the Caucasian female, but into the mind of the general white public during (but not limited to) the reign of apartheid, we find that the black man “is required not only to be black but he must be black in relation to the white man”.⁸⁴ Thereby, the black man, the signified, by virtue of the white population, the signifiers, is not a man at all, but rather a composite of attributes awarded him by external perceptions.

The title itself carries certain negative connotations, suggesting distain, if not apprehension, at the thought of a potential encounter. Accordingly, Gordimer presents her audience with a woman consumed by fear and confusion, and a man by desperation.⁸⁵ The current truth, but simultaneously overall ideological misconception, concerning their dramatic meeting and further coexistence, is commented on by Gordimer herself. The author reveals the origin of her chosen title, deeming the black man’s attack on the focalizer the only reason behind their encounter; “the only thing that could bring them together.”⁸⁶

Ultimately, answering the question posed by the story’s title, Gordimer concludes that “I think that the way things are going now, there isn’t any other place...where we can meet. It’s getting, it seems, to the stage where there’s *no* civilized meeting place between black and white anymore. None that is recognized.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, the title is greatly influenced by the viewpoint of the story, portrayed through the white protagonist, duplicating her negative feelings of alarm and revulsion regarding the native man. Thus, the story is effectively “restricted by its own narrative perspective, unable to begin to formulate the desired

⁸³ Ibid., p. xvii.

⁸⁴ Sardar, ‘Foreword to the 2008 Edition’, p. xiii.

⁸⁵ Ibid.,

⁸⁶ Studs Terkel, ‘Nadine Gordimer’, in *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Nancy Topping Bazin, Marilyn Dallman Seymour and Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, Literary Conversations Series (London and Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), pp. 12-32 (p. 30).

⁸⁷ Ibid.,

‘somewhere else’”.⁸⁸ This indicates that not only a political and social barrier, but a mental one as well, has come to exist, resulting in a deep racial and cultural disillusionment, and a divided society wherein both sides are essentially the opposing culture’s “other”.

The story concludes on an ambiguous note, allowing for several interpretations in terms of its ultimate meaning, two in particular which will be explored. When separated from the immediate threat posed by the black man, the focalizer appears to gain perspective regarding her initial reaction. She questions her earlier panicked reactions and her following choice of action. “Why did I fight? she thought suddenly. What did I fight for? Why didn’t I give him the money and let him go?” (p. 96).

Our first examination offers a sobering version of the short story’s outcome, hinting of a continuation of the process of “othering”. Rather than lamenting the nature of the event, and the external political and social ignorance which *enabled* the situation, the focalizer is potentially trying to comprehend *why* she chose to engage in a physical struggle with a dangerous brute. If so, in her mind, the native arguably constitutes a concept and a foreign entity, leaving her unable to assign him genuine human qualities. As a result she cannot recognize that he is possessed of human needs beyond sexual urges and aggression.

Her beliefs condemn not only her assailant, but also herself, as she indirectly chooses to affiliate herself with the narrow-minded convictions of white supremacists. Such a notion saddens Gordimer, as, according to the author herself, it is a “great tragedy: that this opportunity – it might have been a unique one on the continent – has been thrown away.”⁸⁹

In reacting as she does to his presence, the white woman not so much *misinterprets* his identity as she *disregards* it, ignoring his individuality and instead choosing to accept a series of preconceived notions regarding his person. To “judge a stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it,” Homi Bhabha explains, which

⁸⁸ Head, ‘The Short Stories’, p. 165.

⁸⁹ Terkel, ‘Nadine Gordimer’, p. 31.

according to the theorist “is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and the dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized).”⁹⁰ Thus, through this dismissal the unnamed focalizer bastardizes both the black man’s individuality, as well as the larger concept of Negritude, which refers to the “sum of the cultural values of the black world.”⁹¹

At this point, however, I seem to reach an impasse. Though fuelled by emotions of terror and revulsion, the focalizer keeps silent regarding the event, informing no one. Given the nature of the incident, and her own ideological persuasion, this appears puzzling. The only logical explanation available is a concern within the focalizer that she will somehow be tainted by the event. Reaching civilization and approaching a nearby house, ready to inform its inhabitants of her recent scare, she suddenly changes her mind, upon imaging the impending outcome. Resolving to keep the incident to herself, she turns away from the gate and proceeds to walk “down the road slowly, like an invalid” (p. 96).

However, whether she would have been met with negative reactions or not is in fact irrelevant, as it is *presented* as fact within her own psyche. Thereby she is once more a victim, unable to free herself from the racial restraints of her own mind. Moreover, despite her current fear and confusion, would she actually *wish* to be informed of an alternative ideology of benign racial and cultural coexistence? According to the theories of Edward Said, the Western world to a large extent based its own identity on determining the identity of a *counterpart*. Thus, it was able to elevate its own social, cultural and biological heritage by effectively tearing down the status of those which they considered “the other” (providing them with degrading attributes). “There is a quest for the Negro,” explains Frantz Fanon, “the Negro is in demand, one cannot

⁹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 94-120 (p. 95).

⁹¹ Léopold Sédar Senghor, ‘Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century’, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory – A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 27-35 (p. 28).

get along without him, he is needed, but only if he is made palatable in a certain way.”⁹² The native becomes a mirror image to which the focalizer subconsciously compares herself; the black self establishing and validating its white counterpart, while whiteness in fact deletes the black self.⁹³ Ultimately, should the image of the native, “the other”, be altered to a genuine human persona, so in turn would her own image be altered, forcing her to re-evaluate her own identity.

Through this, readers are witnessing the conclusion of a peculiar psychological process, in which theory and fact are required to coincide, creating a single reality. For Fanon, the concept of “the other” constitutes “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated”.⁹⁴ Thus, the suspicions of the focalizer (and the culture to which she belongs), regarding the menace of the black population, is proven correct, completing a two-part procedure of information. “Wherever he goes,” laments Fanon, “the Negro remains a Negro”,⁹⁵ an entity stripped of individuality, or the privilege reassessment; his biological heritage superseding any notion of equal, individual humanity.⁹⁶

[F]or the colonist, the Negro was neither an Angolan nor a Nigerian, for he simply spoke of ‘the Negro’. For colonialism, this vast continent was the haunt of savages, a country riddled with superstitions and fanaticism, destined for contempt, weighed down by the curse of God, a country of cannibals – in short, the Negro’s country.⁹⁷

⁹² Frantz Fanon, ‘The Negro and Psychopathology’, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 109-162 (p. 135).

⁹³ Ania Loomba, ‘Colonial and Postcolonial Identities’, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, ed. by John Drakakis, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 91-153 (p. 124).

⁹⁴ Bhabha, ‘The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, p. 95.

⁹⁵ T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, ‘Paulette Nardal, Race Consciousness and Antillean Letters’, in *Race* (Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), pp. 95-106(?) (pp. 96-97), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 20 January 2011]

⁹⁶ Bhabha, ‘The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, p. 108.

⁹⁷ Frantz Fanon, ‘On National Culture’, in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory – A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 36-52 (p. 38).

“The definition of civilization and barbarism rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between ‘black’ and ‘white’, self and other”,⁹⁸ claims Ania Loomba, perhaps, like Fanon, suggesting that “the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man.”⁹⁹ Yet, if I re-examines the questioned posed by the focalizer: “Why did I fight?” (p. 96), an alternate interpretation soon presents itself.

A second reading presents a more benign, hopeful presentation of meaning, suggesting a unique moment of self-insight on behalf of the focalizer, wherein the female protagonist is overpowered by comprehension and sympathy. Having desperately battled the black man over her possessions and her freedom, the narrative then takes a surprising turn of events, as the focalizer, upon having escaped to safety, finds herself unable to make a statement, informing others of the event. She appears to realize the implication revealed by his unfortunate physical condition, recalling his “red eyes, and the smell and those cracks in his feet, fissures, erosions”. Thus, she potentially berates herself for not having immediately granted him the financial aid he so obviously needed: “She shuddered. The cold of the morning flowed into her” (p. 96).

It we pursue this particular line of thought, the story, though possibly the most basic and instinctual occurrence of defining an “other”, nevertheless allows for a deeper comprehension of racial politics. For, ultimately readers experience a somewhat ironic twist of fate. In something akin to completion of antithesis, the focalizer, in the aftermath of fleeing from her attacker, is left in a dishevelled state. Strongly reminiscent of the original image of the native man, she herself is described as being sweaty, having torn her clothes and left unable to convey her message. Moreover, it would seem as though the focalizer concludes that she cannot align herself with a racist regime of suppression, which would generalize

⁹⁸ Ania Loomba, ‘Situating Postcolonial Studies’, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, ed. by John Drakakis, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 7-90(p. 53).

⁹⁹ Frantz Fanon, quoted in Loomba, ‘Colonial and Postcolonial Identities’, p. 123.

such an incident were they to be informed of it. In the end, by making peace with her previous role as a victim, she is able to transcend it.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, the female protagonist seemingly acknowledges the extenuating circumstances of the situation. Indeed her learned fear ultimately gives way to reflection centred on her own conduct (and considerably lessens the narrative distance between author and focalizer). At this moment, we to some extent touch upon the instinctual urge to deem the native as an “other”, addressing the psychological, partly irrational, aspect of the focalizer’s encounter. Unlike texts such as “Ah, Woe Is Me” and “Six Feet of The Country”, in which the narrative closes on the useless gesture of a white characters, as they attempt to breach racial barriers,¹⁰¹ this particular outcome suggests a genuine understanding on the part of a white character. Thus the narrative, through the potential insight gained on behalf of the focalizer – an inbred psychological factor seemingly overcome through rational thought – indicates that the racial barriers invoked (apartheid in particular) are nothing more than artificial, human constructions, whose necessity and significance are merely figments of the fearful mind, and whose natural destiny it is to be overcome.

Self and “other”: “The Catch”

For the second portion of this chapter, I will devote my attention to another of Nadine Gordimer’s works: the short story “The Catch”. This text relays the nature and consequences of another encounter across the cultural and ethnical divide. The plot of this particular tale, however, reveals an obvious altercation in the interaction between signifier and signified, portraying a calmer and more benign interaction over a slightly longer period of time. Ironically, by virtue of this *difference* in narrative, the reader is in fact ultimately able to discern a *pattern* when comparing the two texts.

¹⁰⁰ Ettin, ‘No One Knows’, pp. 105-106.

¹⁰¹ Loflin, ‘Nadine Gordimer (November 20, 1923-)’, p. 184.

“The Catch” portrays the tragic relationship between an Indian fisherman and a white Afrikaaner couple, on holiday in a seaside resort in Durban.¹⁰² The “cool grey morning” (p. 92) of the previous story is replaced by the delightful surroundings of a vacation resort, the change in scenery suggesting a more beneficial interaction, but also, perhaps, the circumstances of a strictly *temporary* arrangement. Still, the narrative continues to take place outside the perimeters of ordinary life,¹⁰³ existing within what Gordimer herself labels a “half-world”.¹⁰⁴

Readers are at once met with a presentation of the white couple and the fisherman, of “they” in relation to “him”, as well as a brief physical description of the coloured party himself. Much like his predecessor, “the native”, of “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”, his outward appearance initially precedes all other aspects of his person, linking him to his social class and biological heritage. In contrast, despite their sunbathing, there is given no information regarding the appearance of the white couple, with the obvious exception of their light skin (which is, perhaps, their most dominant feature). Contrary to the one-sided narrative of “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”, however, *both* parties are awarded the privilege of the spoken word. Here, as readers we glimpse the potential of a genuine connection, which was brutally denied in the previous text. According to German Orientalist Max Müller, the existence of verbal communication may in fact be considered the ultimate bond, “because,” insists Müller, “that kinship is far more important than the mere kinship of blood. Blood may be thicker than water, but language is thicker than blood”.¹⁰⁵

Generally, the story – initially at least – differs greatly from its predecessor in terms of the interaction of its characters. Fuelled by polite exchanges, and childish curiosity at the thought of the foreign entity, which the Indian constitute, the white characters experience none

¹⁰² Terkel, ‘Nadine Gordimer’, p. 19.

¹⁰³ Ibid.,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁰⁵ K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, ‘Max Müller’, in *Eminent Orientalists – Indian, European, American* (New Dehli and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1991), pp. 161-204 (p. 167), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 20 March 2011]

of the fear and repulsion which weighed down their counterpart, as the couple pursues a friendly relationship with the Indian fisherman. At this point, when compared to the previous encounter between “other” and “self” as explored in “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”, the relationship here appears to be of a positive nature. However, the process of “othering” is an escalating one, looming just under the kindly surface and gradually revealing its existence.

The ultimate outcome of their acquaintance, and indirectly of their personal persuasions, is to some extent reflected in the manner in which both parties choose to spend their free time. “They idly watched him go, envious of the fisherman’s life not because they could ever really have lived it themselves, but because it had about it the frame of their holiday freedom” (Nadine Gordimer, “The Catch”, p. 9). “Though they are all on vacation from work, they seem to remain separated by the difference between leisure and idleness.”¹⁰⁶ In the essay “Idleness in South Africa”, John M. Coetzee links the concept of leisure to improvement and constructive efforts, while idleness can promise no such benefits, essentially being nothing more than stasis.¹⁰⁷ This line of thought suggests that the characters are set apart by an invisible divide, and that, unlike their coloured counterpart, the white characters potentially lack the ability to reflect and grow.

Furthermore, the relation shared between the three, despite the couple’s apparent enthusiasm, soon displays signs of frailty:

They did not know his name, and now, although they might have asked the first day and got away with it, it was suddenly impossible, because he didn’t ask them theirs. So their you’s and he’s and I’s took on the positiveness of names. (p. 12)

¹⁰⁶ Barbara J. Eckstein, ‘Separation, Assimilation, and the State’, in *The Language of Fiction in a World of Pain - Reading Politics as a Paradox* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), pp. 107-156(?) (p. 120), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 21 March 2011]

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*,

This arrangement, regarding the state of address, supposedly “seemed to deepen their sense of communication by the fact that they introduced none of the objectivity that names bring” (p. 12). Still, given the overall nature of the story, and the notion that naming would arguably add *subjectivity* and further personal depth to the relation, I am tempted to believe that this is in fact a strategy (either subconscious or deliberate), employed by the white characters in order to avoid genuine social intimacy with the Indian fisherman.

By virtue of this assessment, it is perhaps not surprising that, through the course of the story, the relationship is coloured by a distinct sense of naïve superiority on the count of the Caucasian couple: “The fact that he was an Indian troubled them hardly at all. They almost forgot he *was* an Indian” (p. 10). In their eyes it would seem as though their new acquaintance suffers from an unfortunate quality of character, which they are gracefully able to almost overlook. While he may constitute a human being, he is not an equal, but instead a lesser and interesting creature, perceived by them as “their Indian” (p. 12).

Through the course of the story, there appears an association to animal qualities. His role in their lives is linked to that of a good-natured animal, a simple, though nevertheless entertaining creature. For instance, upon first hearing his voice, they note neither its sound, nor his eyes or his face, but rather his teeth, finding them to be “the good useful teeth of an animal” (p. 9). Thus, it would seem as though the relationship is indeed one tainted by racial prejudice:

He was ‘their’ Indian. When they were home they might remember the holiday by him as you might remember a particular holiday as the one you used to play with a spaniel on the beach every day. It would be, of course, a nameless spaniel, an ownerless spaniel, an entertaining creature existing nowhere in your life outside that holiday, yet bound with absolute intimacy within that holiday itself. (p. 12)

In their minds, his is, on some level, a subhuman property to be possessed (“their Indian” (p. 12)), and through their company they provide him with civilized human

characteristics. This, however, would seem to be a natural consequence of the teachings of colonialism, in which a supposed “biological inferior race of unintelligent backward individuals” waits “for the European enlightenment to reach their land and for the enlightened visitor to breathe life into them.”¹⁰⁸ Once more, the text in question portrays a scenario in which the personal views of the author distinguish themselves from those of the white characters, in relation to racial and social issues.

Through the course of the story, “the other”, though seemingly stagnant, may ironically also be viewed as versatile. Thus, the “terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy”,¹⁰⁹ which were so potent in the previous short story, have been replaced by the image of a good-natured, simple-minded creature, fascinating but backwards and helpless nonetheless.

However, the white characters are to some degree also assigned a category not of their own choosing. If the Indian, “the other” is associated with animal qualities, his two Caucasian companions are seen as ignorant and infantile. Their apparent social and cultural ignorance is linked to the viewpoint of the Indian himself, as they “stood by like children” (p. 10), and he, in turn, beheld them “the proud, almost rueful way one looks at two attractive children” (p. 13).

There is a clear difference within their characters, as though the Indian, unlike his counterparts, does not allow for this pity to evolve into an instance of “otherness” in which the couple would be childish immature and pathetic creatures to be laughed at. Though the inner workings of his mind are largely closed to us, readers can still determine his benevolent nature, as he continues to grant his newfound friends the same friendliness and courtesy as before.

His counterparts, however, do not likewise accept weakness in his persona, as he does in theirs, but instead allow it to steer their overall perception in a negative direction,

¹⁰⁸ Piyel Haldar, ‘Plato and Orientalism’, in *Law, Orientalism and Postcolonialism – The Jurisdiction of the Lotus Eaters* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 27-52(?) (p. 47), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 21 March 2011]

¹⁰⁹ Bhabha, ‘The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, p. 104.

xenophobic resentment bleeding through: “It irritated her although she smiled,” writes Gordimer, describing the feelings of the white woman, “this habit of other races of slipping out of one’s questioning, giving vague but adamant assurances of sureties which were supposed to be hidden but that one knew perfectly well did not exist at all” (p. 19).

In the end, the couple’s childlike fascination with the Indian, and, by extension, their friendship, eventually culminates in a moment of celebratory delight, after which their curious fascination with his character fades, and is replaced with an acute sense of xenophobia. Still, even prior to this unfortunate outcome, they appear to be growing bored with his presence: “they sat back and looked at one another with a kind of lazy exasperation. They felt weak and unwilling, defeating interest” (p. 14). The impersonal message given them, describing him as “[a]n Indian” (p. 14), in which he requests their presence, suggests as much.¹¹⁰ Still, their previous enthusiasm nevertheless returns, upon hearing the news of their friend having caught a huge salmon, and recalling their earlier promise to photograph it.

Water cleared it like a cloth wiping a film from a diamond; out shone the magnificent fish, stiff and handsome in its mail of scales, glittering a thousand opals of color, set with two brilliant deep eyes all hard clear beauty [...] a king from another world. (p. 16)

Initially fascinating and beautifully natural, and yet part of another world, the creature is similar in nature to the presentation of the Indian fisherman. However, when “the pictures had been taken, the peak of interest had been touched” (p. 18). This statement applies not only to the crowd of eager bystanders, but to the white couple in question as well: their interest has reached its peak; their delighted, if not immature, interest in his person is satisfied, foreshadowing their eventual dismissal of the fisherman. This interpretation is fuelled by the

¹¹⁰ Robert. F. Hugh, ‘The Meticulous Vision: Sojourners and Fat Ladies’, in *Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Sylvia E. Bowman and Joseph Jones (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1974), pp. 19-33 (pp. 27-28).

female focalizer's dismissal of the Indian afterwards, insisting that he find a way to transport his own catch without their aid, as "they're strong. They're used to it" (p. 19).

The white couple is soon accompanied by Caucasian friends, and readers find that the joy and childlike attention previously awarded their coloured companion, is now redirected, and essentially usurped, by the presence of these friends. The carefree "spaniel" (p. 12) is effectively abandoned in favour of more sophisticated company. This altercation in their personal relationships is further portrayed through the apt metaphor of changing waters:

As though the dam of their quiet withdrawal had been fuller than they thought, fuller than they could withstand, they found themselves toppling over into their old stream again, that might run on pointlessly and busy as the brook for ever and ever. (pp. 19-20)

However, the central conflict of the story comes to pass when these two spheres, that of the temporary vacation, and that of the couple's everyday life, converge, resulting in a supposed social crisis. The aforementioned conflict comes to pass as the white protagonists, alongside their friends, intend to dine out. Travelling by car, the group comes across the fisherman, as he is struggling in vain to transport his large catch. At this moment, the man is reduced to a shameful, pitying state, no longer the fascinating and skilled fisherman who managed to acquire a celebrated catch, which gleamed like opals, but rather "an old Indian with a sack or something" (p. 21).

Despite (or, perhaps, because of) their former intimacy, the assistance offered is strained, the passengers harbouring no desire to associate themselves with a primitive, uncivilized creature such as this. It would seem they wanted the man, and their relation to him, to remain within the temporal limits of the vacation, as nothing beyond an enjoyable memory. A permanent presence is certainly not desired. Thus, the wife attempts to avoid the confrontation, and when she finds she cannot, adopts a slightly frantic manner in her efforts to

disassociate herself from the Indian, and excuse their relationship. “Don’t think we’re crazy,” she insists, “[t]his Indian is really quite a personality” (p. 21). For, that which could earlier be almost forgotten is now the central focus of the situation. He is no longer “their Indian” (p. 12), now he is simply *an* Indian; an “other”. The circumstances which dictate their relationship have been completely rewritten.

The Indian is “enslaved by his inferiority, the white man by his superiority.”¹¹¹ The husband, however, proves himself slightly more lenient than his spouse, which in some small manner separates him from the collective supremacist beliefs, consequently awarding him an individual identity in the form of a name (“Les” (p. 21)).

As the Indian is access to the motor vehicle, a central issue of the story, namely its title, is addressed. The subject is mentioned first by the white women with whom the Indian had previously shared a friendship, as she condescendingly asks if his catch is not “more trouble than it is worth” (p. 23) (a statement which is later repeated by himself).¹¹² Her comment, a barely masked insult on the fisherman’s expense, allows the reader to perceive the titular catch as being a dual nature. For the concept refers both *literally* to the troublesome physical weight of the large salmon, which earlier brought him praise and recognition, as well as *figuratively* to the symbolic catch, gained through his short-lived friendship with the Caucasian couple. If the fish weighs him down physically, the countenance of his white counterparts weights him down socially, culturally and mentally, effectively incapacitating his person.¹¹³ In their eyes he constitutes the helpless, ignorant, subservient, and ultimately thankful native; any notion of genuine friendship is washed away. On the other hand, they themselves occupy the position of the proud, but justifiable superior.

¹¹¹ Homi Bhabha, ‘Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition’, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory – A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 112-123 (p. 116).

¹¹² Eckstein, ‘Separation, Assimilation, and the State’, p. 122.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*,

Overall, his definition is always by their choosing: functioning firstly as a device by which they divide the sections of their day, later as a source of entertainment, and finally a nuisance. The characters come to constitute for each other mutual burdens. To the Indian fisherman, the white characters, equipped with their agitated, derogatory, racist attitude, constitute “an expensive, rotting weight he cannot carry.”¹¹⁴ Simultaneously, his own continued presence in *their* lives, present to his former friends a heavy burden also.¹¹⁵

However, on closer inspection, it would seem as though the signifiers in fact *enable* this situation to take place. While in similar fashion the unnamed female focalizer of “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” permitted the native to become a threat by reacting to him the way she did, the white protagonists of “The Catch” adopt a similar, limited supremacist behavioural pattern. By choosing to treat him as a burden, they consequently make him seem to be one.

Ultimately, within the perimeters of this short story, I find that the theory of Max Müller, about the unifying properties of language appears faulty. For, though there *is* a greater sense of communication, when compared to the previous story, and thus perspective, the point of focalization continues to be the Caucasian one. Likewise, the power of *identification* clearly still remains within white hands: “He’s got a nice open face,” said the young man. “He wouldn’t have a face like that if he worked as a waiter at the hotel” (p. 9). Although words are indeed exchanged, there exists no *genuine* communication, verbally or otherwise. The signifiers hear, but they choose not to listen; not to *comprehend*. They ignore the deeper reality of that which they signify, substituting it with an equivalent of their own choosing. “If language, however, is the veil between the self and the other, then it can be lifted and used for

¹¹⁴ Ibid.,

¹¹⁵ Ibid.,

communication only if the colonial object is recognized and respected as a subject, capable of speaking itself.”¹¹⁶

While the previous short story offered the potential of a racial coexistence, if not presently, at some point in the future, “The Catch” differs from its predecessor in that it offers no such alternative. The only coexistence portrayed is a brittle one; indeed there is no place where “we” can meet.

Concluding, I find that the poor fisherman has proven himself neither unkind nor socially reserved, or unintelligent. Yet the man, like his predecessor, is defined as a threat. What, then, has he done to warrant this unjustified treatment? Nothing, the reader suspects, beyond unintentionally interfering in their affairs of the Caucasian couple. What evil, then, could possibly be invoked by his presence? Ultimately, it would appear that no breach of moral code or criminal action is necessary; his ancestry being quite enough to have him condemned. It is as though the concept of abstract fear is once more at large, affecting those weak to its effects, upon experiencing an unwilling confrontation with a designated “other”: “She felt a stab of cold uncertainty, as if she herself did not know what she had said, did not know what she had meant, or might have meant” (p. 24). The Caucasian couple, to different extents, appear to be ruled by an instinctual need to preserve not their *physical* safety, but rather the well-being of their social position, and through this, their *individual* identity.

Furthermore, within the narrative of “The Catch”, the process of “othering” is associated with a collective effort, the white couple abandoning their tentative friendship with the Indian fisherman upon reuniting with their Caucasian friends. The resulting humiliation and rejection of his person may be viewed as functioning as an opportunity for bonding, and gaining acceptance amongst their “own kind”.

¹¹⁶ Konstanze Streese, ‘Writing the Other’s Language: Modes of Linguistic Representation in German Colonial and Anti-Colonial Literature’, in *Encountering the Other(s) – Studies in Literature, History and Culture*, ed. by Gisela Brinkler-Gabler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 285-294 (p. 291).

Both short stories examined describe the underlying fear and overall treachery of both apartheid and the previous colonial project, which through their attempts to protect their respective supporters, instead victimizes them by effectively robbing them of rational thought, compassion and general humanity, substituting a numbing and paralyzing xenophobic fear. It is only by distancing oneself from their practice that one is able to regain any resemblance of a sensible, sympathetic perspective; an individual potentially capable of transcending the collective supremacist vision.

Chapter 3

A Passage to India by E.M. Forster

Introduction: E.M. Forster

The intention of this third chapter is to discuss the creation, and consequent characterization of the “other”, wherein signifier and signified initially exist in something akin to a positive social relationship, yet ultimately falling prey to stereotyping, as portrayed in the novel *A Passage to India*, by Edward Morgan Forster (1879 – 1970). I choose to focus primarily on the characters of Dr. Aziz, Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, with particular emphasis on the circumstances surrounding the incident of the Marabar Caves. In addition, I shall briefly discuss the implications of a female presence within the colonial project, and consequently, the notion of a feminine “other”.

Published in 1924, the text itself came into being as a direct result of Forster’s travels through the Asian subcontinent. The author “representing the finest and most human in the liberal spirit, began in “A Passage to India” the tradition of using Indian life as an image of personal experiences.”¹¹⁷ As such, the text reflects Forster’s private experiences and resulting views.

The novel’s title holds an obvious allusion to Walt Whitman’s poem “Passage to India”, written on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Similar to the approach of the transcendentalist poet, Forster also chose to focus on “the new temporal closeness of India and West as well as the longing for more metaphoric, metaphysical kinds of closeness.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Boris Ford ed., *The Present - From Orwell to Naipaul*, The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, 8 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 319.

¹¹⁸ Jane Mallison, ‘Stranger in a Strange Land: Unaccustomed Places, Real and Fancied’, in *Book Smart - Your Essential Reading List for Becoming a Literary Genius in 365 Days* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc, 2008), pp. 145-168(?) (p. 150), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 07 April 2011]

Forster's interest was not in the geography and demography of India, but as he heard and read of, in the unsettled and shifting web of social relationships among the all too numerous stratifications of the Indian populace, and in the not-so-well-defined master-slave relationship between the Anglo-Indian or British rulers and the Indians or the natives who were ruled.¹¹⁹

The concept of humanity was an entirely natural affair, claimed Forster, suggesting the unity of the herd instincts was still intact, but undermined by "the sham and artificiality of the adventitious civilizations and cultures".¹²⁰ As a consequence, there was created an unnatural division amongst humanity, based on ethnicity.¹²¹ According to the author, only the benevolent and universal powers of friendship could unify mankind, and allow it to prosper; by making individual and personal relationships triumph over larger, more abstract notions.¹²² Forster longed for a rather utopian society in which human beings would come together through the power of love.

However, retaining a realistic perception of the world as it truly was, the author recognized the inherent difficulties in the realization of his vision. "When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West," Forster relates, commenting upon his motivation behind writing the novel in question, "but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable".¹²³ Through the aid of his

¹¹⁹ Sunil Kumar Sarker, 'Forster: Life and Works', in *E.M. Forster's A Passage to India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd, 2007), pp. 1-116(?) (p. 42), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 07 April 2011]

¹²⁰ Sunil Kumar Sarker, 'A Passage to India', in *E.M. Forster's A Passage to India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd, 2007), pp. 167-552 (p. 439), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 07 April 2011]

¹²¹ *Ibid.*,

¹²² Sunil Kumar Sarker, 'Forster: The Man and Some of His Views', in *E.M. Forster's A Passage to India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd, 2007), pp. 117-147(pp. 127), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 07 April 2011]

¹²³ E.M. Forster, quoted in Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', in E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 7-25 (p. 14).

novel, Forster acknowledges the inherent potency of culture in terms of its ability to convey and maintain beliefs which allow for mastery.¹²⁴

Anglo and the Oriental: *A Passage to India*

“What are the cultural grounds on which both natives and liberal Europeans lived and understood each other?” Edward Said once pondered. “How much could they grant each other? How, within the circle of imperial domination, could they deal with each other before radical change occurred?”¹²⁵ It is precisely these questions Forster explores through the narrative of his novel.¹²⁶ As the title of the text indicates, the concept of the “journey” functions as a central, narrative tool, both literally and figuratively:

geographically as a travel, culturally as transgression, surveillance, colonization; mythically as a passage from one realm of existence into a possibly more mysterious one; metanarratively a travel from the realm of meaning into the realm of confusion; hermeneutically a journey from political culture into the culture of compassion.¹²⁷

Unlike the previous texts (and despite the novel’s strict power structure), the author grants his audience equal insight into the motivations and thought patterns of both the coloured and the white characters. Through an omniscient third-person narrator, Forster focalize both signifier and signified, granting both the privilege of language and articulation.

The very first chapter reveals the central problem of the novel, namely a distinct division among the population of its characters. Overall, *A Passage to India* appears to represent a microcosm of the exchanges between the British Empire and its colonial subjects.

¹²⁴ Betty Jay, “‘A Delicious and Terrible Book’ - The Reception of *A Passage to India*”, in *E.M. Forster, A Passage to India*, ed. by Betty Jay and Richard Beynon (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 1998), pp. 11-26 (p. 12).

¹²⁵ Edward W. Said, ‘Resistance and Opposition’, in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 191-281 (p. 200).

¹²⁶ Rama Kundu, ‘India through British Eyes in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*’, *žmogus ir žodis*, II (2008) <<http://www.biblioteka.vpu.lt/zmogusirzodis/PDF/literaturologija/2008/kundu32-37.pdf>> [accessed April 14 2011] (para. 2 of 30)

¹²⁷ Ferenc Zsélyi, ‘Culture and Transgression in Late Colonial Discourse. E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*’ (2006) <http://www.inst.at/trans/16Nr/04_3/zselyi16.htm> [accessed April 28 2011] (para. 5 of 44)

The divide between the Anglo and the Indian communities is made evident through the novel's portrayal of Chandrapore, the city which houses two separate societies, the area belonging to native Indians, as well as the English Civil Station.¹²⁸ The *physical* geography of Chandrapore mirrors the undesirable state of the *emotional, social* and *cultural* landscape generated by the current power structure.

The section of the town occupied by native inhabitants is portrayed as a rather undesirable and generally inhumane location, where the “streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in the gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest” (Forster *A Passage to India*, p. 29). The city comes to present a very cruel reality indeed, in the form of a monotonous world of mud, where buildings are in shambles, and the remains of victims of drowning left to decay. Ironically, the only thing shown to persist is in fact the boarders of the town “like some low but indestructible form of life” (p. 29).

The area in which the British live, however, is in complete opposition to its Indian counterpart. Appearing as “a totally different place” (p. 29) it represents a sturdy, intelligent architecture and beautiful, lush gardens: “It is a tropical pleasaunce, washed by a noble river” (p. 29). While infused with a sense of refined, cultural superiority, the Civil Station is still united with its lesser counterpart through the power of “the overarching sky” (p. 30). For, it is made clear; the sky cares little for petty human differences, joining all together, regardless of race, culture or social position.¹²⁹ This vivid portrayal of the natural unifying properties of the

¹²⁸ Nivedita Tandon, ‘Thesis, Anti-thesis and Synthesis in Forster’s *A passage to India*’, in *E.M. Forster's A Passage to India*, ed. by Reena Mitra (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2008), pp. 82-90 (p. 83), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 19 April 2011]

¹²⁹ Rebecka Gronstedt, ‘Racialism in *A Passage to India*’, in *The Imperial Archive* <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/india/Racialism-Forster.html>> [accessed April 19 2011] (para. 23 of 28)

heavens reflects the author's personal convictions, as Forster maintained that Man ought to be separated by neither emotional nor geographical distance.¹³⁰

However, interwoven in the narrative, amongst Forster's views of unity and friendship, are the varying perceptions of his characters. Overall, the novel focuses the majority of its efforts on translating and navigating through the sensitive concepts of cultural diversity and imbalance.¹³¹ Yet, throughout the course of the text, themes of miscomprehension, division and opposition, both literal and symbolic, continue to live on: "The separation from race, sex from sex, culture from culture, even of man from himself, is what underlies every relationship. The separation of the English from the Indians is merely the most dramatic of the chasms in this novel."¹³²

Forster grants his readers immediate insight into the core of English-Indian interaction, portraying native Indians' perception of their colonizers, and thus foreshadowing the eventual conflicts between the two sides. The native character of Dr. Aziz, alongside friends Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali, discuss a theory according to which the English (with few exceptions) go through a gradual social and cultural metamorphosis, altering their initial benign behavioural pattern, leaving them with a cruel and racist persuasion. "They all become exactly the same – not worse, not better," insists Hamidullah. "I give any Englishman two years [...] And I give any Englishwoman six months. All are exactly alike" (p. 32).

Ironically, by acknowledging the process through which the Anglo-Indian population deems them "other", they themselves generate the basis for an *English* stereotype, whose psyche and actions can be easily determined. Aziz offers an alternate, though premature, approach to the conundrum of "othering", centred on a lack of interaction between the two

¹³⁰ Sarker 'Forster: The Man and Some of His Views', pp. 124-125 and Sarker, 'A Passage to India', p. 439.

¹³¹ Peter Childs, 'A Passage to India: Introduction', in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 347-350 (p. 349).

¹³² Lionel Trilling, 'A Passage to India', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Passage to India - A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1970), pp. 17-32 (p. 26).

civilizations: “Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends?” questions the physician. “Let us shut them out and be jolly” (p. 33). This would, however, constitute an oversimplified solution to a substantially complex problem, addressing the immediate *consequences* of the issue but not in fact resolving the main problem itself.

The issue is further examined and exemplified through the experiences and interactions of Aziz, along with British tourists Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, who each represent aspects of the process of “othering”, both colonizers and subjects harbouring certain misconceptions. The initial portrayal of both Adela and Mrs. Moore indicates their mutual desire to immerse themselves in India, to explore that which they perceive to be the essence of the country. Forster, however, soon reveals this wish to be an utterly futile endeavour, associated with miscomprehension, and ultimately bound to disappoint. For “nothing in India is identifiable,” states Forster’s narrator, “the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else” (p. 92). A myriad of varying concepts, experiences and emotions, India cannot be made into quantifiable and separate segments.

Despite this shared delusion, however, the two women prove vastly different in terms of beliefs and motivations. The elderly Mrs. Moore, a direct product of British social and cultural values and breeding, initially embodies not the negative, derogatory approach of the colonial master, but instead adopts a positive opinion of India and its inhabitants, of “the other”.

As soon as she landed in India it seemed to her good, and when she saw the water flowing through the mosque-tank, or the Ganges, or the moon, caught in the shawl of night with all the other stars, it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one. To be one with the universe! So dignified and simple. (pp. 193-194)

The difference in her person is made apparent in her initial meeting with Aziz, where the latter, after a momentary display of anger, is astonished by her understanding of, and adherence to, Indian customs. The conversation between the Indian doctor and the English

tourist, during which the pair share personal history, culminates in Aziz joyfully declaring Mrs. Moore to be “an Oriental” (p. 41), and the two of them to be “in the same box” (p. 40), a comment whose sad actuality is later made evident.

While Rama Kundu, among other critics, perceives Mrs. Moore’s optimistic mannerisms simply as proof of her sweet, adaptable and spiritual inclinations – her ultimate fate a tragic, though unforeseen occurrence – I intend to argue otherwise.¹³³ By virtue of her arguably idealistic approach to India, it appears that Mrs. Moore embraces the concept of romantic Orientalism. Coined by postcolonial scholar Ronald Inden, the term refers to a branch of Orientalism which reveres the East, finding it to represent an exotic and spiritual reality, superior to that of the West.¹³⁴ However, much like its negative counterpart, this vision is based on false, preconceived premises:

‘romantic Orientalism’ agrees with the prevailing view that India is the mirror-opposite of Europe; it continues to postulate cultural ‘essences’ and thus perpetuates the same (or at least similar) cultural stereotypes about the East. The romanticist view of the Orient, then, is still a distortion, even if motivated at times by respect for the Orient. As such, it participates in the projection of stereotypical forms that allows for the domestication of the East.¹³⁵

According to Edward Said, this branch of Orientalism, despite its seemingly positive nature, promised not glorious unification and coexistence, but rather an ultimate downfall and disillusionment (foreshadowing Mrs. Moore’s eventual spiritual and religious disintegration):

Many of the earliest oriental amateurs began by welcoming the Orient [...] The Orient was overvalued for its pantheism, its spirituality, its stability, its longevity, its primitivity, and so forth [...] Yet almost without exception such

¹³³ Rama Kundu, ‘Characters’, in *E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India* (New Dehli: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Ltd., 2007), pp. 124-178(?) (pp.145-146), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 08 November 2011]

¹³⁴ Richard King, ‘Orientalism and Indian Religions’, in *Orientalism and Religion – Post-Colonial Theory, India and “The Mystic East”* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 82-95(?) (p. 92), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 30 April 2011]

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*,

overesteem was followed by a counterresponse: the Orient suddenly appeared lamentably underhumanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric and so forth.¹³⁶

Adela Quested, however, does not take part in this idealistic view. She is associated instead with depressing aspects of Western education. Arguably lacking the natural enthusiasm of which her male counterpart possesses, Adela supposedly “goes on and on as if she's at a lecture – trying ever so hard to understand India and life, and occasionally taking a note” (p. 120).

Still, regardless of their personal motivations, the conduct of Adela and Mrs. Moore clash with that of their countrymen:

One said: ‘Wanting to see Indians! How new that sounds!’ Another, ‘Natives, why, fancy!’ A third, more serious, said, ‘Let me explain. Natives don’t respect one any the more after meeting one, you see.’

[...]

‘Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die,’ said Mrs Callendar.

‘How if he went to heaven?’ asked Mrs Moore, with a gentle but crooked smile.

‘He can go where he likes as long as he doesn’t come near me. They give me the creeps.’ (p. 44)

Especially Mrs. Moore’s son and Adela’s potential fiancée, Chandrapore city magistrate Ronny Heaslop, finds their intentions most unsettling. While his mother is identified as “an Oriental”, Ronny is a quintessential representative of British colonial and imperial powers. “Heaslop’s a sahib; he’s the type we want,” insists Mr. Turton, “he’s one of us” (p. 43). Mrs. Moore, exhibiting none of the racist supremacy found in her son, is taken aback at the apparent change in Ronny, demonstrated by his attitude towards the Indian natives. The process said to change the disposition of all English has indeed altered Ronny Heaslop. “One touch of regret – not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart –

¹³⁶ Edward W. Said, ‘Orientalist Structures and Restructures’, in *Orientalism* (New York and Toronto: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 111-198 (p. 150).

would have made him a different man,” reflects Mrs. Moore sadly, “and the British Empire a different institution” (p. 64).

In Ronny’s opinion, however, the presence of an English authority in India is quite necessary, lest the country disintegrate into chaos. “[W]hat do you and Adela want me to do?” he demands of his mother. “Go against my class, against all the people I respect and admire out here? Lose such power as I have for doing good in this country, because my behaviour isn’t pleasant? [...] I’m out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force” (p. 63). To Ronny it seems unnecessary to change his approach.

Through *A Passage to India*, Forster portrays a society based on a hierarchical system, in which the dominance of the white races is based on their supposed superior ethnic heritage, and the lesser value of those who did not share their heritage. Thus, to the colonial forces there was no question of peaceful coexistence, but rather strained supremacy.

It would seem as though the position of the English colonizer is one of simultaneous despair, over the primitive and savage colonized, as well as delight, due to the superiority and power this consequently warrants. Despite their lack of personal interaction, they somehow possessed intimate knowledge of the character of the Indian natives. The English perceived the colonized subjects as constituting specific “types”, all of whom they knew how to handle. Thus, in order to ensure their own individual and collective superiority, and consequently power, they must effectively ensure the inferiority of the natives.

By virtue of these narrow-minded, racial perimeters, the Anglo-Indians ensure that they “themselves become a type, the White Man, with a fixed set of judgments, gestures, and language”.¹³⁷ Forster was deeply discontented by the British style of government, with its apparent lack of empathy and human values, particularly the way in which his countrymen

¹³⁷ Brenda R. Silver, ‘Periphrasis, Power and Rape in *A Passage to India*’, in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 363-376 (p. 366).

perceived foreign cultures, Forster finding within its *modus operandi* traces of aristocracy, tradition and conformity.¹³⁸

A more rational and realistic alternative to Adela and Mrs. Moore, as well as the English in general, appears through the character of Cyril Fielding. Possessing “no racial feeling” (p. 74), the schoolmaster of Government College shares a genuine friendship with Dr. Aziz, Fielding does not idealize him, as Mrs. Moore perhaps does, nor does he fear him as a dangerous native, as Adela comes to do. It has been suggested that, by virtue of his open-minded persuasion, Fielding in fact functions as a fictional alter ego for Forster, embodying the author’s humanist values.¹³⁹ “The world [Fielding] believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence – a creed ill suited to Chandrapore, but he had come out too late to lose it.” (p. 74) Yet, despite the benign potential represented by Cyril Fielding, and his association with Aziz, the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized ultimately confronts a devastating crisis of racial, legal and psychological ramifications, cementing their unequal relationship.

The momentum of the story, directly addressing the crucial issue of racial coexistence, takes the form of outing of a benevolent (though also rather ambitious) nature to the Marabar Caves, arranged by Aziz. Intended as a unifying device leading its participants to transcend the separation of their respective races, Aziz proclaims the outing to be “an expedition of friends” (p. 155). Initially, the joyous atmosphere evident prior to entering the caves suggests that the expedition might in fact fulfil its intended goal of mending the strained English-Indian relationship.¹⁴⁰ However, the concept of unification soon faces the threat of stereotyping in the wake of two psychological collapses.

¹³⁸ Sarker, ‘Forster: Life and Works’, p. 44.

¹³⁹ Sunil Kumar Sarker, ‘A Passage to India’, in *A Companion to E.M. Forster*, 3 vols (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd, 2007), pp. 689-1074(?) (p. 876), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 05 May 2011]

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 929-930.

In a most cruel fashion, the dark and disturbing atmosphere of the caves comes to counteract the frail sense of unity established, producing within the minds of its chosen victims a sensation of primordial horror. Adela and Mrs. Moore, and indirectly Dr. Aziz, are all forced to endure the crippling effects of this horror. Upon Adela and Mrs. Moore's respective entries into the caves, disaster strikes. The elderly Mrs. Moore, previously so enamoured with India and its spiritual qualities, now finds herself its helpless victim.

A Marabar cave had been horrid as far as Mrs Moore was concerned [...] She lost Aziz and Adela in the dark, didn't know who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile naked thing struck her face and settled on her mouth like a pad. She tried to regain the entrance tunnel, but an influx of villagers swept her back. She hit her head. For an instant she went mad, hitting and gasping like a fanatic. For not only did the crush and stench alarm her; there was also a terrifying echo. (p. 144)

Of course there is no genuine physical threat to be found inside these caves; except bats and bees there is nothing but the ever-present darkness. But the deep sense of devastation and destruction which overtakes Mrs. Moore's person (and, in a different manner, perhaps Adela also), is the result of no mere claustrophobic anxiety. For, as Forster explains, that which is found within the darkness of the caves is a symbolic presence: "[s]omething very old and very small. Before time, it was before space also. Something snub-nosed, incapable of generosity – the undying worm itself" (p. 194). Given the sensitive context in which it appears I might hypothesize that the creature is, essentially, the embodiment of a cruel, primordial instinct of survival, born out of the inherent darkness within the human psyche.

As warned by Said, the wonderful vision of India has run its course, leaving its victims faced with overwhelming disappointment. Through her experience in the Marabar Caves Mrs. Moore is symbolically confronted with the more sobering realities of India, which she finds foreign and utterly frightening. The country is consequently stripped of the ideal qualities

which she previously awarded it, Mrs. Moore discovering that “the wonderful India of her opening weeks, with its cool nights and acceptable hints of infinity, had vanished” (p. 153).

Upon reflection, this outcome, though of course unfortunate, is not surprising. For, perhaps the inspiration behind Mrs. Moore’s approach lies not in a *genuine* embrace of the East, but rather an abandonment of the West.¹⁴¹ “There is no actual contact with the Orient, Said would argue: what is at issue is not really the Orient, so much as the Orient’s *use*”¹⁴² to its supposedly unsatisfying Western counterpart.¹⁴³

Overall, the caves provide a manifestation of a subconscious fear: a genuine reflection of reality, which prompts a consequent re-evaluation of one’s established identity. Mrs. Moore’s instinctual reaction is to retreat into her own psyche, to ensure the preservation of her sense of self. Yet despite her mental and spiritual decline, a fragment of her previous tenderness still remains, rendering her capable of perceiving the truth regarding the eventual allegations of sexual assault made by Adela against Dr. Aziz. Despite this illuminating knowledge, however, she chooses to remain passive. For, having become essentially emotionally barren, as a result of her experience in the Caves, she observes that the “[g]ood, happy, small people” (p. 191), that she encountered, upon first arriving in India “do not exist, they were a dream” (p. 191). Consequently, she cares for the wellbeing of no one – not Ronny, Adela, nor Aziz – but herself: “Her Christian tenderness had gone, or it had developed into a hardness, a just irritation against the human race” (pp. 186-187).

Unfortunately, Mrs. Moore is not given the chance to regain her former vigour. Weakened and disillusioned she resolves to return to England, only to fall prey to a premature demise at sea during the voyage home. However, despite the bitter dissatisfaction and

¹⁴¹ Abdullah Al-Dabbagh, ‘Orientalism, Literary Orientalism and Romanticism’, in *Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Universalism*, Postcolonial Studies, 9 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010), pp. 1-18(?) (p. 13), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 12 May 2011]

¹⁴² *Ibid.*,

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*,

disregard she held for the world around her at the time of her passing, she remains an influential presence even after her death, being, in a sense, reincarnated in the form of the mythological entity, “Esmis Esmoor” (p. 207). This ironic narrative development indicates that not only Mrs. Moore’s intimacy with Dr. Aziz, but also the relationship of the English colonizer and the Indian colonized are “the result of miscommunication, and their convivial, but fleeting encounter a symbol of Britain’s missed opportunity to truly capture colonial difference.”¹⁴⁴

Though her trauma reveals itself in rather different context, Adela is not permitted to leave the caves unharmed either. However, the consequences of Adela’s actions have significantly larger repercussions than those of Mrs. Moore, the younger woman stigmatizing the unfortunate Dr. Aziz, and through him the entire Indian population. In a tragic sense, the event is brought about through the mutual lack of genuine comprehension between the two characters, at once the result of and resulting in naivety and prejudices. For, having gravely offended Aziz by a thoughtless question, about the nature of his marital state, the physician places the responsibility of Adela’s supervision in the hands of a guide, unknowingly allowing her to wander alone into the dark caves.

Surprisingly enough, though, despite the magnitude of its consequences, and contrary to Mrs. Moore’s grievous experience, which is revealed in great detail, the outcome of Adela’s visit to the caves is only indirectly relayed. Employing a fascinating narrative tactic, Forster allows the event to take place unnarrated. Thus, the narrator allows Adela to abandon the narrative for a short interval, as she enters the caves, contemplating her current boredom, as well as the concept of marriage. At this point, the narrative moves beyond its original

¹⁴⁴ John Marx, ‘Gender Aesthetics and Colonial Expertise’, in *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 92-121(?) (p. 114), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 12 May 2011]

fictional perimeters, addressing the instinctive assumptions of both its characters and its audience.

By aid of this manoeuvre, Forster intended, quite possibly, to influence the opinion of his contemporaries. While Adela, through the novel's final outcome, must inevitably revisit her original assumptions regarding Aziz's character, Forster likewise forces his audience to reconsider certain deep-rooted convictions and instinctual prejudices of their own, in which they perhaps simply *assumed* Aziz to be the guilty party. In the end, Forster presents a viable alternative to the trend of racist texts so often produced by his fellow writers, in which honourable white men and women face cruel and brutal savages, over whom they nobly triumph.

Furthermore, the structure of dual identification, which functioned as an integral part of the narrative in the previously explored short story, "Is There No Where Else We Can Meet?" by Nadine Gordimer, is portrayed once more. Forster proceeds to exemplify the manner in which the phenomenon of the Orient, and thus the concept of "the other", is coloured by cultural and social differences, but also "interwoven by sexual imageries, unconscious fantasies, desires, fear and dreams."¹⁴⁵

As a consequence of the curious psychological devastation forced on her by the caves, during which her subconscious falters under the massive weight of both brutal reality and perverse fantasy, Adela's mind requires (and subsequently creates) a lesser counterpart, a binary opposite, through which it may re-establish itself, and thereby ensure its continued survival. Thus, the threatening images of burgeoning sexuality, the institution of marriage and the truth of her own passionless disposition, translates into a believable alternative, in the form of a scene of attempted rape, committed by an Indian native, namely Aziz. Arguably,

¹⁴⁵ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, 'Mapping the Field of Colonial Discourse', in *Colonial Fantasies – Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne and Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 14-38(?) (p. 26), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed June 02 2011]

this particular event, as opposed to the one depicted in “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” portrays a more severe instance, in which the psychological potency of colonial fantasy is evident to the point where the actual, physical presence of a lesser counterpart becomes unnecessary, overpowering reality to the point of complete negation.

However, the manner in which Adela reduces Aziz to the status of “other” in order to preserve her own identity soon becomes a matter of preserving a *collective* Anglo-Indian identity. For that which in reality is only an accusation – a *claim*, not a proven fact – is readily, if not happily, accepted as factual truth by the Anglo-Indian population. The concept of a personal tragedy is effectively transformed into a collective social and cultural victory: absolute, indisputable proof of the superiority of the Caucasian race.

Throughout this entire horrendous affair, the circumstances of his predicament are painfully clear to Aziz: “From the moment of his arrest he was done for, he had dropped like a wounded animal; he had despaired, not through cowardice, but because he knew that an Englishwoman’s word would always outweigh his own” (p. 214).

If Aziz is branded a malicious rapist by Anglo-Indian community, Adela is likewise reduced to a concept. In the aftermath of her experience in the caves and consequent allegations, Adela is met with a nearly overwhelming reaction of love and support from her countrymen: “Each felt that all he loved best in the world was at stake, demanding revenge, and was filled with a not unpleasant glow, in which the chilly and half-known features of Miss Quested vanished, and were replaced by all that is sweetest and warmest in the private life” (p. 174). It seems her accusations have transformed her into a physical manifestation of alleged British superiority.

Still, despite the magnitude of her hallucination, the notion of Aziz’s potential innocence does indeed enter Adela’s otherwise chaotic mind. However, this pattern of thought is immediately thwarted by the frantic insistence of her surroundings:

Adela had stopped crying. An extraordinary expression was on her face, half relief, half horror. She repeated, "Aziz, Aziz."
[...]
"Aziz...have I made a mistake?"
"You're over-tired," he cried, not much surprised.
"Ronny, he's innocent; I made an awful mistake." (p. 189)

As Adela grows ever more insistent in her belief regarding the innocence of Dr. Aziz, Ronny, in a most despicable manner, prays on her fragile mental condition in an effort to dissuade her:

"But Ronny, dear Ronny, perhaps there oughtn't to be any trial."
"I don't quite know what you're saying, and I don't think you do."
"If Dr Aziz never did it he ought to be let out."
A shiver like impending death passed over Ronny. (p. 189)

However, despite her suspicions, the collective psyche of the colonial agenda manages to descend upon her, the only trace of doubt remaining being a persistent echo.

The moment Adela Quested admits not only to herself, but to the court, the reality of the physician's innocence, however, not only the echo, but also the love and adoration of her countrymen vanish. Adela's status is dramatically altered; no longer is she the icon of Caucasian moral and pride, but viewed instead as a treacherous creature, betraying not only her fellow Anglo-Indians, but the imperial project in its entirety. For, even if only for the moment, the balance of power has dramatically shifted. The previously righteous British people are now reduced to wrongful accusers, misinformed in their convictions, and, by extension, their superiority.

Throughout the course of the trial itself, there is no pretence of exercising judicial justice, but rather a display of imperial power, the English using the trial as an opportunity to not only cruelly undermine Aziz's character, but discredit the characters of the entire Indian population.

The white man is convinced that the Negro is a beast; if it is not the length of the penis, then it is the sexual potency that impresses him. Face to face with this man who is 'different from himself,' he needs to defend himself. In other words, to personify The Other.¹⁴⁶

The full extent of the preconceived convictions of the English community is revealed through the efforts of Fielding. Attempting, and ultimately failing, to appeal to a sense of justice in his peers, the school master is forced to realize that "If God himself descended from heaven into their Club and said you were innocent, they would disbelieve Him" (p. 243). To the collective Anglo-Indian consciousness, the issue of guilt could quite possibly be considered irrelevant, the community simply requiring an opportunity to assert their authority, the need for an "other" deeply rooted in their psyche. As such, Aziz's actions and racial origin function merely as devices, supporting the superiority on which the Anglo-Indians base their culture. If this indeed be the case, Adela and Aziz both are reduced to mere pawns; their individual fates simply becoming means to an end.

The status of Dr. Aziz is determined not first and foremost by the accusations of Adela Quested, which arguably function only as a catalyst, but by his own racial identity. Due to his ethnic origin, there evidently can be no question of his guilt; he is by *definition* a sexual deviant. To the Western mind, the Oriental (and indeed coloured races overall) possessed "not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire" and "deep generative energies".¹⁴⁷

Ultimately, I find that the concept of assault is in fact *reversed*: the colonizer, in a most cruel fashion, is praying on the colonized. Aziz is "symbolically 'raped' by the accusation of rape",¹⁴⁸ robbed of the remnants of his already frail autonomy and instead associated with a

¹⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, 'The Negro and Psychopathology', in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 109-162 (p. 131).

¹⁴⁷ Said, 'Orientalist Structures and Restructures', p.188.

¹⁴⁸ Silver, 'Periphrasis, Power and Rape in *A Passage to India*', p. 371.

repugnant, inhuman evil. “They all avoided mentioning that name. It had become synonymous with the Power of Evil. He was ‘the prisoner’, ‘the person in question’, ‘the defence’” (p. 189).

The argumentation employed against Aziz does not emphasize genuine, factual evidence, but is instead based on a preposterous notion of an inescapable biological imperative, which dictate that “the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa” (p. 202). This statement at once emphasizes the supposed *appeal* of the white race, as well as the physical and mental *inferiority* of the Indian natives. Some have embellished on this particular line of thought, proposing the imperative to be of a dual nature; a combination of an animalistic attraction to white female flesh, coupled with an underlying desire to extract revenge upon the white colonizer by sexually dominating his female counterpart.¹⁴⁹

The supposed carnal monstrosities of the Orient were a cause for fear and repulsion in Western society, perceived as a grievous example of social and moral decline.¹⁵⁰ The “other’s” sinful sexual urges posed a danger to both themselves and their surroundings, and ultimately, the only manner in which to remedy the situation was for the lecherous natives to adopt a lifestyle similar to that of their colonial masters.¹⁵¹ Furthering this line of thought, Frantz Fanon likens the concept of colonialism to the conduct of a stern matriarchal figure. Colonialism “did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle, loving mother who protects her children from a hostile environment,” argues Fanon, “but rather a mother who

¹⁴⁹ René Maran, *Un Homme Pared aux Autres* (Paris: Editions Arc-en-Ciel, 1947), p. 185.

¹⁵⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Colonial Studies and the History of Sexuality’, in *Race and the Education of Desire - Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 1-18 (p. 7), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 02 June 2011]

¹⁵¹ Margaret A. Farley, ‘Difficult Crossings: Diverse Traditions’, in *Just Love – A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (London and New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), pp. 57-108(?) (p. 67), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 28 May 2011]

unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts.”¹⁵²

Though there is, unfortunately, some truth to this statement, is colonialism truly in possession of a *feminine* identity? As Aziz and his countrymen are reduced to “others”, in the aftermath of the former’s supposed attack on Adela, Anglo-Indian women, assumed to be potential victims of further native lust, ironically face a similar treatment. Removing the individual identities of Anglo-Indian women, and reinventing them as a fragile and helpless segment requiring male protection against the brutal and lecherous forces of “the other”, the Caucasian male effectively gains power over both groups.¹⁵³ Though Caucasian women support its ideologies and act accordingly, colonialism remains a largely male enterprise. Overall, the Indian Aziz and the female Adela, constituting substantially different counterparts to the patriarchal British Empire, are simply reduced to vehicles furthering the imperial agenda. Ultimately, readers find that “Orientalism”, and consequently the process of stereotyping, as presented in *A Passage to India*, “takes perverse shape as a ‘male power fantasy’ that’s sexualizes” the “Orient for Western power and possession.”¹⁵⁴ However, Forster allows the male colonial agenda to be overturned by a woman. For in the end, Adela does what the rest of her fellow Britons (with the exception of Fielding) are unable to do, namely recognize Aziz for what he is: not an Oriental paragon of ultimate decency or virtue, but neither a sexual deviant nor a mindless brute – a human being *cannot* be defined by such devastating absolutes. Adela appears to momentarily nullify the stereotyping of Orientalism. Consequently she is able to escape the restricting colonial mindset: “she was no longer examining life, but being examined by it; she had become a real person” (p. 223).

¹⁵² Frantz Fanon, ‘On National Culture’, in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory – A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 36-52 (p. 37).

¹⁵³ Silver, ‘Periphrasis, Power and Rape in *A Passage to India*’, p.370.

¹⁵⁴ Lee Wallace, ‘Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities’, in *Sexual Encounters – Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 9-37 (p. 21), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 07 June 2011]

Unfortunately, a larger context than simply that of Adela and Aziz still remains. Indeed, the overall state of native and English relations is symbolized through the final interactions of Aziz and *Fielding*.

Aziz in an awful rage danced this way and that, not knowing what do, and cried: "Down with the English anyhow. That's certain. Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you the most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty-five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then" – he rode against him furiously – "and then," he concluded, half-kissing him, "you and I shall be friends." (p. 289)

The wish for a greater sense of unity is indeed present; however, the current colonial circumstances, which dictate their respective fates, prevent such a relationship from finding place.

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want."

But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there." (p. 289)

The separation which marked the novel's opening pages is once more emphasized, leaving readers with a continued gulf between the Orient and the Occident.¹⁵⁵ Acknowledging the flaws and misconceptions within both the native and Anglo-Indian communities, Forster refrains from romanticizing or abhorring either group, and through his concluding dialogue, recognizes a potential within them to transcend the limitations of stereotypes and power structures, in order to engage in true friendship.¹⁵⁶ Ultimately, he suggests through his

¹⁵⁵ Edward W. Said, 'Orientalism Now', in *Orientalism* (New York and Toronto: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 201-328 (p. 244).

¹⁵⁶ Zakia Patak et al, 'The Prinsonhouse of Orientalism', in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 378-386 (p. 383).

narrative that there are no definite cultural and social absolutes to which humanity must adhere.

While inspiring, this insight nevertheless presents itself as a rather ambitious goal. For, despite an arguably close proximity over time, and in some instances, a benevolent relationship, the stereotype continues to survive. However, unlike the panic displayed in the previous chapter, the paralyzing, primordial fear which cripples both female protagonists, is not directly associated with “the other”, but rather in its aftermath directed at the stereotype in terms of blame. If so, is “the other” simply a symptom of a larger cause?

Chapter 4

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe

Introduction: Daniel Defoe and the Novel

This fourth chapter aims to investigate the mind of the signifier, and consequently the process of “othering”, as it appears in the novel *The Life & Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe (1660-1731). A pioneering force for both colonial literature and the novel form, *Robinson Crusoe* arguably functions as the basis which all colonial literature – if not fictional literature in general – must be seen in relation to.

The text itself describes not simply a momentary reaction, or a superficial short-term liaison, but a relationship sustained over the course of several years, exploring a wider range of aspects associated with the motivations and reasoning behind imperialism, colonialism and “othering” in general. I intend to observe the gradual and direct structure of colonialism, also discussing the concept of “the other” in its earliest, and possibly most potent, form. The chapter will attempt to decipher and describe the characteristics of the original, colonial stereotype. Furthermore, I will consider the aspect of property and ownership, as well as the concept of the so-called “White Man’s Burden”, in relation to the colonial project.

This task will be accomplished through an examination of the quest for a recreation of identity, in relation to the imperial and colonial agenda, as portrayed in the aforementioned text. I choose to focus my attention primarily on the titular character’s efforts to domesticate his new surroundings, as well as his eventual relationship with the native, Friday, believing it to be most crucial to my endeavours.

Robinson Crusoe recounts the life of its titular character, an Englishman of German descent, relating the circumstances which lead him to abandon his native English home in

order to seek prosperity elsewhere, culminating in twenty-eight years of near-solitude on a pacific island, before finally being granted safe passage home.

Born from a genuine artistic endeavour, as well as a practical requirement, Defoe himself sought to earn a profit by the production of an innovative text which would appeal to the interest of the large masses.¹⁵⁷ However, the text also reveals an inherent political agenda as the plot of the novel alludes to the British colonization in Spanish America, an endeavour, which was not accomplished to Daniel Defoe's satisfaction.¹⁵⁸ Seen thus, the text may have been an attempt to rectify the situation by presenting an improved manner of colonization.¹⁵⁹ Though having produced more than 570 titles during his lifetime, *Robinson Crusoe* remains one of Defoe's most memorable works, undoubtedly due to its significant contribution to the realm of literature in terms of style and form.¹⁶⁰

In the eyes of literary critic Ian Watt, Daniel Defoe, alongside other esteemed writers, such as Samuel Richardson, constitutes an exceptional breed of authors, being amongst "the first great writers in our literature who did not take their plots from mythology, history, legend or previous literature."¹⁶¹

His fiction is the first which presents us with a picture both of the individual life in its larger perspective as a historical process, and in its closer view which shows the process being acted out against the background of the most ephemeral thoughts and action.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ John Richetti, 'Robinson Crusoe', in *The Life of Daniel Defoe – A Critical Biography*, ed. by Claude Rawson, Blackwell Critical Biographies (Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 174-212 (p. 175).

¹⁵⁸ Richard Philips, 'The Geography of Robinson Crusoe', in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 120-127 (p. 124)

¹⁵⁹ Richetti, 'Robinson Crusoe', p. 175.

¹⁶⁰ John Richetti, 'Preface', in *The Life of Daniel Defoe – A Critical Biography*, ed. by Claude Rawson (Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. vi-ix (p. vii).

¹⁶¹ Ian P. Watt, 'Realism and the Novel Form', in *The Rise of the Novel - Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 9-34(?) (p. 14), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 09 October 2011]

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Despite representing a literary form yet in its infant stage, Watt insists that through the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe forms the basis for this gradually developing species – the novel – which must fulfil certain obligations. “[T]he novel,” observes Watt, “is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its readers with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their action, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms.”¹⁶³

Other critics have argued that rather than constituting an entirely new creation, in addition to being defined by the author himself as “a parable, or an allusive allegoric history”,¹⁶⁴ Defoe’s text was considered a combination of other, already established literary species, functioning as “an artifact rooted in various intertexts”,¹⁶⁵ embodying Biblical texts, journalistic writings regarding castaways, adventure narratives, travel literature and the autobiography.¹⁶⁶ I agree that particularly the latter two forms are in abundant evidence throughout the novel.

Both by virtue of the informative nature of its full title, as well as the narrative which follows, the text reveals itself as belonging to the literary genre of the fictional autobiography, portraying a man’s life (in varying detail) from birth to present. As a result, a journal narrative is introduced, providing a sense of authenticity through a systematic structure, relating intimate events, discoveries, feelings and contemplations.¹⁶⁷

Surprisingly, however, author Daniel Defoe deemphasizes his *own* role, to merely that of an editor reporting “a just History of Fact” (Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, p. 3). The

¹⁶³ Richetti, ‘*Robinson Crusoe*’, pp. 185-186.

¹⁶⁴ Daniel Defoe, *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by George W. Aitken (London: J.M. dent & Sons, Ltd, 1899), p. 101.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Stam, ‘Colonial and Postcolonial Classics: From *Robinson Crusoe* to Survivor’, in *Literature Through Film - Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), pp. 63-101(?) (p. 65).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*,

¹⁶⁷ ‘journal’, in Encyclopedia Britannica Online <<http://www.britannica.com>> [accessed 10 October 2011]

original title aids this intention, providing a detailed, personalized account of the experiences of Robinson Crusoe, supporting the claim that he is indeed an authentic figure:

*THE LIFE AND Strange Surprizing ADVENTURES of ROBINSON CRUSOE, Of YORK, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River OROONOQUES Having been caft ashore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. WITH An Account how he was at last as frangely deliver'd by PYRATES Written by himself.*¹⁶⁸

Ultimately, in the fashion of a so-called false document, Robinson Crusoe himself is projected as not only the protagonist of the story, but also its writer and narrator; presenting him as the implied author of the text – a surrogate for Defoe's own presence:

Defoe's narrative is [...] insistently particularized; his hero is an exactly rendered, actualized person, Robinson Crusoe, of York, with a unique identity, a vehicle for generalized significance but also a speaker who claims first and foremost to be a real person (despite the extraordinary nature of his life) just like each individual reader of his meticulously rendered story.¹⁶⁹

Travel literature, likewise, consists of a curious blend of fact and fiction. Seemingly favouring colonial areas and unexplored territories, the genre generated imagery of exotic utopias, ethical journeys and scientific discoveries, while simultaneously entertaining and cementing divisions based on geographical and racial variations.¹⁷⁰ This popular literary tendency granted private, British citizens significant insight into an entertaining foreign fantasy, which disguised itself as truth, without ever having to travel beyond the borders of their homeland. The genre, as portrayed through the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*, "focuses on the otherness (rather than the inverted sameness) of the place visited, and on the truth-

¹⁶⁸ The full title of the novel, as shown in its original edition.

¹⁶⁹ Richetti, 'Robinson Crusoe', p. 185.

¹⁷⁰ Edward W. Said, 'The Scope of Orientalism', in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp.31-110 (p.99), and Edward W. Said, 'Orientalist Structures and Restructures', in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 113-197 (p. 117).

value of an account as well as the story it contained. It thus reflected the emergence of a wider empiricism and of a modern social economy in general.”¹⁷¹

Overall, the narrative structure and style found within *Robinson Crusoe* came to be regarded with interest, spawning not only two sequels (*The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* (1720)), but also a distinct literary subgenre, namely the Robinsonade. This genre tends to depict Man’s lonely battle against the vicious and seemingly unrelenting forces of nature, culminating in both physical and emotional trauma, but ultimately emerging victorious over the aforementioned forces.¹⁷² For these tales speak of “an abundant nature that allows castaways to thrive in isolation and assure readers that European man, faced with challenges of life in such a setting, would ‘domesticate a world full of wonders’.”¹⁷³

The result of an innovative literary imagination, Robinson Crusoe supposedly embodies the very spirit of the noble yet decidedly human European conqueror, possessing “the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity.”¹⁷⁴ In fact, the text arguably portrays not merely the origins of the established

¹⁷¹ David Fausett, ‘Conclusion’, in *The Strange Surprising Sources of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by C.C Barfoot and Theo D’haen, *Studies in Comparative Literature*, 3 (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 195-204(?) (p. 199), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 09 October 2011]

¹⁷² Maximillian E. Novak, ‘Edenic Desires: *Robinson Crusoe*, the Robinsonade, and Utopias’, in *Historical Boundaries, Narrative Forms – Essays on English Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century in Honor of Everett Zimmerman*, ed. by Lorna Clymer and Robert Mayer (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2007), pp. 19-36 (p. 20), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 29 June 2011] and Robert Mayer, ‘Three Cinematic Robinsonades’, in *Eighteenth Century Fiction on Screen*, ed. by Robert Mayer (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid and Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 35-51 (p. 35), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 29 June 2011]

¹⁷³ Mayer, ‘Three Cinematic Robinsonades’, p. 35.

¹⁷⁴ James Joyce, quoted in Patrick J. Keane, ‘Coleridge, Crusoe, and *The Ancient Mariner*’, in *Coleridge’s Submerged Politics – The Ancient Mariner and Robinson Crusoe* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994), pp. 124-166(?) (p. 140), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 08 October 2011]

modern English novel but a distinct connection between the literary form and imperialism as a geopolitical concept.¹⁷⁵

In the end, however, the operations of the previously mentioned “imperial prototype”, and the overall notion of the European man’s continued domestication of the world around him, generated concerns. Consequently, as the plot of the novel in question relies heavily on the incorporation of colonial concepts, some have found the narrative to advocate unsavoury notions of “imperialism, racism and misogyny”.¹⁷⁶ For the text functions not only as a testimony of to the glory of the enlightened imperialist, but also as an account of the lesser, and undeveloped qualities of those which were not perceived as Robinson’s equals.

Crusoe and the Creation of Identity

Closely associated with the concept of self-realization, the origins of the titular character’s experiences are born from a wish to transcend the limitations of the station into which he was born, coupled with an underlying desire to defy his father. Still, his family relations function as nothing more than footnotes, seemingly mere proof of his being in possession of an adequate pedigree. However, Robinson Crusoe soon dooms himself. After a series of misadventures caused by naïve enthusiasm coupled with youthful defiance, through which ultimate success is not obtained, the protagonist is left shipwrecked alone on an unknown pacific island, with no means of escape.

Upon Crusoe’s eventual arrival on the aforementioned island, the narrative consequently undergoes a crucial alteration, incorporating into itself the form of the journal:

¹⁷⁵ Tillman W. Nechtman, ‘Introduction: An Imperial Footprint’, in *Nabobs – Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-21 (p. 2), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 20 July 2011]

¹⁷⁶ David Fausett, ‘The Smeeks-Defoe Debate: A Review’, in *The Strange Surprising Sources of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by C.C Barfoot and Theo D’haen, *Studies in Comparative Literature*, 3 (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 175-194(?) (p. 183), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 04 July 2011]

September 30, 1695. I poor miserable *Robinson Crusoe*, being shipwreck'd, during a dreadful Storm, in the offing, came on Shore on this dismal unfortunat Island, which I call'd *the Island of Despair*, all the rest of the Ship's Company being drown'd, and my self almost dead. (p. 52.)

Through the employment of his journal Crusoe introduces structure into an otherwise unpredictable existence, and, moreover, is allowed to gradually “resituate himself on more familiar ground as colonist and patriarch rather than as shipwrecked isolate”¹⁷⁷:

November 1. I set up my Tent under a Rock, and lay there for the first Night, making it as large as I could with Stakes driven into it to swing my Hammock upon.

Nov. 2. I set up all my Chests and Boards, and the Pièces of Timber which made my Rafts, and with them a Fence round me, a little within the Place I had mark'd out for my Fortification.

Nov. 3. I went out with my Gun and kill'd two Fowls like Ducks, which were good Food. In the Afternoon went to work to make me a Table

Nov. 4. This Morning I began to order my times of Work, of going out with my Gun, time of Sleep, and time of Diversion, viz. Every Morning I walk'd with my Gun for two or three Hours if it did not rain, then employ'd my self to work till about Eleven a-Clock, then eat what I had to live on, and from Twelve to Two I lay down to sleep [...] and then in the Evening to work again. (p. 53)

Taking on the guise of patriarch and colonialist, Crusoe seeks to cultivate the world of the island in his own – and by extension the British – image, creating structure through sophisticated shelters, boarders and enclosures in which to keep livestock, possessing considerable determination and natural skills:

I had never handled a Tool in my Life, and yet in time by Labour, Application and Contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had Tools; however I made abundance of things, even without Tools, and some with no more Tools than an Adze and a Hatchet, which perhaps were never made that way before, and that with infinite Labour. (p. 51)

¹⁷⁷ Rajani Sudan, ‘Introduction’, in *Fair Exotics – Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 1-23(?) (p. 5), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 12 September 2011]

But why continue to embrace this manner of life, when it seems he is forever separated from Britain? Though there are no signs that he shall ever be able to rejoin British society, Defoe makes clear the ways in which the realities of his native home remain in Crusoe's mind. Since British norms and values are a tangible part of the protagonist's psyche and definition, the physical separation is to some extent insignificant. Although separated from his native home and stranded on an island, prompting him to accept a more primitive existence, Crusoe nevertheless strives to recreate its structure and values, so that he might also recreate *himself* from its foundation.

Thus, rather than crafting himself a *new* identity, his original persona categorized by British values and beliefs, is instead reaffirmed, only the limitations posed by his birth, which previously plagued him, have conveniently been removed.¹⁷⁸ Essentially creating a hybrid civilization, Crusoe effectively incorporates elements of sophisticated British society into his new primitive existence, amplifying them in order to compensate for the obvious geographic distance.¹⁷⁹ Thus, the island itself holds a dual role, functioning as both prison and fruitful colony, which Crusoe can shape as he pleases.

Rather than being at the mercy of the island as it helpless prisoner, Crusoe instead seeks to make the island his own. "I was Lord of the whole Manor;" the protagonist announces, clearly enjoying the association of his person to power and authority, "or if I plas'd, I might call my self King, or Emperor over the whole Country which I had Possession of" (p. 94). However, the decision to proclaim himself sovereign, though his subjects constitute nothing beyond a handful of domesticated animals, arguably speaks not only of enjoyment, but an underlying, narcissistic need to assert his own significance.

Granted his dedication and ambitious intentions, on what authority may Crusoe simply claim the island as his own? Does his inhabitancy automatically grant him ownership? In the

¹⁷⁸ Philips, 'The Geography of *Robinson Crusoe*', p. 122.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*,

end, it would appear as though *cultivation*, rather than *residency* provides the titular character ownership of the island. For, in spite of its flourishing nature, Crusoe perceives nothing but savage terrain, made bearable solely by *his* intervention.¹⁸⁰ Through the tools of the White Man, the terrain is tamed and transformed into civilized territory, suitable for the enlightened colonial master.¹⁸¹

In this manner, Crusoe's approach to the concept of property is reminiscent of a general colonial perception in which ownership and authority befall the European master due to his ability to seize – by force if necessary – and successfully cultivate land. Thus, since Robinson Crusoe possesses the *ability* to govern the island; he consequently gains the *right* to do so.

In the mind of Daniel Defoe, Crusoe's overall opportunist approach to the notions of property and authority appeared quite justified, for, when confronted with the struggle of survival, the nature of Man's situation and his subsequent choices were quite clear. "Man is the worst of all God's Creatures to shift for himself,"¹⁸² argued the author, insisting that human beings had no choice but to seize what they required if intending to survive, and subsequently succeed in their individual endeavours.¹⁸³

According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, however, Crusoe's power extends no further than his own solitude, his authority only valid as long as his remains the only human presence to inhabit the island, another's natural desire to survive and flourish potentially threatening

¹⁸⁰ Susan Paterson Glover, 'The Incomplete Tradesman: Daniel Defoe and the Lay of the Land', in *Engendering Legitimacy – Law, Property, and Early Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2006), pp. 101-132 (p. 112), in Google Books <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 14 July 2011]

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸² Daniel Defoe, 'An Essay Upon Projects', in Daniel Defoe and James T. Boulton, *Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe*, ed. by James T. Boulton (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 23-34 (p. 24), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 13 July 2011]

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*,

Crusoe's own.¹⁸⁴ This theory, unfortunately, proves false: Crusoe retains his ruling power even when faced with an additional human presence, possibly even more so.

In fact, the domination and consequential restructuring of the island is not quite sufficient in Crusoe's quest for self-identification. While his conduct may indicate otherwise, the claim of authority arguably *cannot* be fully realized by this continued solitary existence in which his company is only that of animals. The utterances of his tame parrot, through which the bird rather solemnly repeats a fractured version of Crusoe's name and laments his fate: "*Poor Robin Crusoe, Where are you? Where have you been? How come you here?*"(p. 104), suggests a need for a genuine recognition of, and reaction to, his identity. Unfortunately, no animal can provide such a service.

In order to cement his own identity through British imperialist and colonial ties, the protagonist must come to share his domain with another.¹⁸⁵ Furthering this line of thought, Defoe allows the solitary existence of the protagonist to come to an end. After a great many years of loneliness on his island, Robinson Crusoe makes a great yet terrible discovery: the imprint of a single human foot in the sand:

It happen'd one Day about Noon going towards my Boat, I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the Print of a Man's naked Foot on the Shore, which was very plain to be seen in the Sand: I stood like one Thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an Apparition [...] there was exactly the very print of a Foot, Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot. (p. 112)

Even though it announces the existence of another human presence, which has been longed for, this discovery nevertheless unleashes a significant onslaught of fear and dread into the mind of Robinson Crusoe, as he finds that

¹⁸⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'The First Societies', in *The Social Contract, Books I-II* ([n.p.] [Wildside Press LLC], 2010), pp. 6-8 (p. 8), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 18 July 2011] and Maximillian E. Novak, 'Crusoe the King and the Political Evolution of His Island', in *Restoration and Eighteenth Century, Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 3, 2 vols (Houston: Rice University Press, 1962), pp. 337-350 (p. 337).

¹⁸⁵ Nechtman, 'Introduction: An Imperial Footprint', p.2.

He was not alone; his power was not unassailable [...] Until the moment when he stumbled upon that foot print on the beach, Crusoe considered himself sole master of his island [...] that small, singular footprint announced the presence, the physical imprint, of an “other” – the silent infiltration of his island home by an unannounced and unwelcome presence.¹⁸⁶

The protagonist concludes that the being which created the imprint must be a creature worse than any supernatural apparition: a cannibalistic savage. The defining quality of the savage was its cannibalistic diet, a custom which substituted a healthy religious practice.¹⁸⁷ “Truculent by nature and eating human flesh by inclination,” writes Peter Hulme, “they stood opposed to all the tenets of Christian and civilized behaviour.”¹⁸⁸ Described as sub-homo sapien creatures feasting on humans flesh, these beings pose a threat not only to Crusoe’s way of life, in terms of culture and religion, but his actual, physical survival, and consequently his colonial project in its entirety.

Despite never having encountered these people, Crusoe nevertheless envisions with great clarity the gruesome consequences of a potential confrontation (an image of the cannibals obviously having existed in Crusoe’s mind long before he suspected their presence on the island). “I should certainly have them come again in greater Numbers, and devour me,” Crusoe insists, “[...]they would find my Enclosure, destroy all my Corn, carry away all my Flock of tame Goats, and I should perish at last for meer Want” (p. 113). Through these thoughts the identity, and thereby *threat*, of a specific “other” begins to form in his mind. (“Crusoe’s fear is subsequently ‘justified’ in narrative terms by his repeated witnessing of the primal scene of cannibalism.”¹⁸⁹)

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁸⁷ Roxanne Wheeler, “My Savage”, “My Man”: Racial Multiplicity in *Robinson Crusoe*, in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) pp. 128-142 (p. 137).

¹⁸⁸ Peter Hulme, ‘Introduction’, in *Wild Majesty – Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day, An Anthology*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Neil L. Whitehead (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 1-6(?) (p. 4).

¹⁸⁹ Wheeler, “My Savage”, “My Man”: Racial Multiplicity in *Robinson Crusoe*, p. 137.

However, his imperial inclinations of progress and valiancy soon triumphs his seemingly overwhelming fear. “I fancied my self able to manage One, nay, Two or Three Savages, if I had them,” Crusoe eventually theorizes, “so as to make them entirely Slaves to me, to do whatever I should direct them, and to prevent their being able at any time to do me any Hurt” (p. 145). Ultimately, the event does indeed culminate in an encounter with “others”. Those who Crusoe encounters are not primitive though benevolent natives, but rather presented by Defoe as savage cannibals – the ultimate opposite to the enlightened Englishman, in terms of value, integrity and intellect. Though revolted by their hedonistic ways, Crusoe nevertheless experience a great sense of pity for his savage neighbours, “whose barbarous Customs were their own Disaster, being in them a Token indeed of God’s having left them, with the other Nations of that Part of the World, to such Stupidity, and to such inhumane Courses” (p. 168).

Through the existence of these creatures, Defoe depicts what I infer to be the original colonial “other”, who all succeeding “others” descend from: a primitive, vicious and naked creature, its dark skin perceived as a mirroring its perverted soul.¹⁹⁰ Yet despite its hostile and aggressive persuasion, the superior intellect of the White Man proved victorious when confronted with its savage ways. Ultimately, the notion of cannibalism, while grotesque in nature, grants a rather useful opportunity to devaluate the overall character of the native, situating them as an utterly savage and alien counterpart.

Unsurprisingly, the titular character manages to defeat these gruesome creatures, both through physical confrontation, as well as by the rescue and subsequent conversion of one of their own to the belief system and manner of the unrivalled European. Inspecting the man in the manner of a newly acquired possession, Crusoe determines the native’s appearance, and consequent worth, in relation to racial attributes:

¹⁹⁰ Ania Loomba, ‘Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies’, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, ed. by John Drakakis, 2nd edn, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), pp.7-90 (p .64).

He was a comely handsome Fellow, perfectly well made; with straight strong Limbs, not too large; tall and well shap'd...] (p. 148)

His servant earns his appraisal as he embodies certain traits reminiscent of the European, and less of the “darker races”:

He had a very good Countenance, not a fierce and surly Aspect; but seem'd to have something very manly in his Face, and yet he had all the Sweetness and Softness of an European in his Countenance too, especially when he smil'd. His Hair was long and black, not curl'd like Wool; his Forehaed very high, and large, and a great Vivacity and sparkling Sharpness in his Eyes. The CouLOUR of his Skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly yellow nauseous tawny, as the Brasilians, and Virginias, and other Natives of America are; but of bright kind of a dun olive Colour, that had in it something very agreeable; tho' not very easy to describe. His Face was round, and plump, his Nose small, not flat like the Negroes, a very good Mouth, thin Lips, and his fine Teeth well set, and white as Ivory. (pp. 148-149)

The savage man – essentially constituting property – is consequently subjected to the same procedure through which Crusoe shapes his island, namely the civilization of that which is wild and, to British eyes, unseemly:

When he espy'd me, he came running to me, laying himself down upon the Ground, with all the possible Signs of a humble thankful Disposition, making a many antick Gestures to show it: At last he lays His Head flat upon the Ground, close to my Foot, and sets my other Foot upon his Head, as he had done before; and after this; made all the Signs to me of Subjection, Servitude, and Submission imaginable, to let me know, how he would serve me as long as he liv'd. I understood him in many Things, and let him know, I was very well pleas'd with him. (p. 149)

He proceeds to assert ownership of the man whom he so generously saved, providing him with a name, and himself with an authoritarian title:

in a little Time I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me; at first I made him know his name should be *Friday*, which was the Day I sav'd his Life; I call'd him so for the Memory of the Time; I likewise taught him to say *Master*, then let him know, that was to be my name. (p. 149)

Through these events, Crusoe effectively defines himself in the manner which his self-image requires, as the superior, but benevolent English master.

Still, aside from noting certain wild and primitive inclinations, the protagonist cares little for any previously established character of his servant. Whether or not Friday is already in possession of a name of his own is of no concern to Robinson Crusoe, the very thought of such a thing failing to enter his mind. Furthermore, the name which he awards his new companion functions not as an indication of Friday's characteristics but as means of remembering a specific date, which speaks of his own heroic actions in securing the man's safety (and, quite possibly, Friday's resulting duty to him).

However, where some critics propose Crusoe's apparent xenophobia to, in fact, be the result of a xenochial desire to entertain, and consequently merge, with that which is alien,¹⁹¹ I must quite disagree. For, rather than the result of a fascination of the exotic, I believe the protagonist's relationship with Friday is one of necessity. I find that the recreation of Crusoe's quest for re-identification depends heavily on the comparison of his own person – and by extension his culture and social customs – to that of another. In a process resembling a mental mitosis of sorts, the psychological survival of his person requires the construction of an “other” in relation to his own self-image, the latter finding itself superior. In actual fact, though more culturally viable, the psychological aspect of Crusoe's character would have suffered – ,becoming unable to present himself as the superior, unchallenged monarch of the island territory – had he retained his solidarity, or shared his territory with an equal.

Ironically, the titular character requires of Friday the qualities which he considers savage and repulsive, leaving the encounter between “self” and “other” to be characterized by ambivalence, incorporating dread as well as satisfaction.¹⁹² Thus, despite constituting a

¹⁹¹ Sudan, 'Introduction', p. 5.

¹⁹² Ryszard Kapuściński, 'The Viennese Lectures', in *The Other* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), pp. 11-49 (p. 44).

human being, Friday is nevertheless reduced to an artificial construct, his person conceived within the mind of his saviour and master, Robinson Crusoe. As a result, Friday's identity and function are no longer his, but the property of another; he no longer acts for himself, his every move is essentially a reaction to the demands of his master.

The psychological process, through which Crusoe redefines his identity by the assertion of his superiority, is further addressed by the concept of colonial mimicry. The subject refers to an arguably deceitful procedure, which promises equality while producing the opposite effect. On the one hand, the signified partakes in a process of psychological devolution in which "the colonizer demands that the colonized resemble himself or herself through a process of 'narcissistic identification', on the other hand, he or she also disavows this resemblance and even regards it as a 'menace'",¹⁹³ as it would threaten the current, and carefully maintained power structure of imperialism. Thus there is "a desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*"¹⁹⁴

However, a rare, but nevertheless genuine possibility regarding this phenomenon lies in the potential *authenticity* of its outcome. For, as "the product of mimicry is ultimately beyond the control of the colonial master",¹⁹⁵ by emulating the autonomous signifier, the signified subject may be able to shed the restraints directly related to its role as an inferior, becoming "an insurgent subject."¹⁹⁶ This particular outcome, unfortunately, does not occur in the novel. Rather than relaying an objective perspective regarding ethnic relations, the text expresses a firm belief in the benevolent, though rightful rule of the European conqueror,

¹⁹³ Robert Thomas Tierney, 'Introduction', in *Topics of Savagery - The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (London and California: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 1-37(?) (p. 14), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 29 July 2011]

¹⁹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), pp. 121-131 (p. 122).

¹⁹⁵ D. Pal S. Ahluwalia, 'Decolonization and National Liberation', in *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory - African Inflections* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 34-51(?) (p. 36), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 29 July 2011]

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*,

dramatically cementing the limitations of Friday and his countrymen, who are predestined for either eternal damnation or servitude.

In effect, Crusoe allows his servant to remain in his presence, urging him to adopt a civilized way of being (“do exactly as you see me do” (p. 169)). He clothes his “man Friday” (p.170), teaches him to speak English (insofar that he may comprehend, and thus obey, his master’s orders), and informs him of the virtue possessed by the White Man, yet comments on Friday’s supposed shortcomings and inferiorities in comparison to himself. As observed in previous chapters, the gift of the spoken word – the essential and potent power of communication – must be wielded in favour of the signifier, ensuring that his authority is not compromised. Although awarded certain liberties, Friday remains firmly situated within the same social and cultural sphere as his native people.

By partaking in the process of colonial mimicry, Friday himself unconsciously accepts, and thereby validates, Crusoe’s subjective and flawed perception of his person. The imperialist view, to which Crusoe adheres to, however, deems this interaction a natural affair, a direct result of a justified, biological structure. An arguably imprecise determination originating within the English vocabulary during the sixteenth century, the notion of race speaks of a skewed hierarchical classification rather than a general, objective overview of ethnicity.¹⁹⁷ Dubious scientific methods were employed in order to categorize the various human populations, physical variations found in the human species indicating inherent mental, ethical and emotional behavioural patterns.¹⁹⁸ Caucasian features were, of course, deemed the ultimate ideal, the superior alternative to all other races, both in terms of physical and intellectual attributes; the overall worth of human beings gradually lessening as they grew darker.

¹⁹⁷ ‘race’, in Encyclopedia Britannica Online <<http://www.britannica.com>> [accessed 11 October 2011]

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.,

Crusoe *does* questions his own actions, pondering the nature of evil, recognizing the inherent cruelty in the heart of men. Still, he refrains from relating these thoughts to his own colonial project, when in fact, through the medium of religion, Crusoe is the one who introduces the concept of evil into his island habitat, as a means of domination.

Nevertheless, by virtue of his European origin, he imagines himself entitled to act as he pleases, and also as the well-deserving object of Friday's eternal gratitude and loyalty. In fact, according to imperial views, through his interaction with Friday he is partaking in a decidedly noble (and necessary) endeavour by attempting to redeem an otherwise lost creature. I am left to ponder if Robison Crusoe has taken it upon himself to fulfil "the White Man's burden?"¹⁹⁹ Alluding to the poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899) by Rudyard Kipling, the concept speaks of the heavy, but necessary duty of the White race to aid their coloured counterparts, to "*teach wild Mans to be good sober tame Mans [...] tell them know God, pray God, and live new Life*" (p. 163).

Associated with such a concept, Crusoe emerges not merely as a righteous and capable colonist, but as a powerful missionary figure, although one who would preach not only the word of God, but more importantly the word of the White Man. In addition, the "new Life" provided for them would essentially belong to their European masters, rather than themselves.

Through their biological ancestry which provided superior materials and intellect, however, the Caucasian race was entitled to civilize and develop the world around them. The White Man functioned as a noble agent: brave and determined, but also a humble subject, obediently carrying out the natural Law as instated by God and nature. However, despite this generous disposition, the Caucasian "saviour" often received neither understanding nor appreciation from those they sought to save (crudely categorized by Kipling as "sullen

¹⁹⁹ Patrick Parrinder, 'Cross-Grained Crusoe: Defoe and the Contradictions of Englishness', in *Nation & Novel - The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Days* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 63- 81(p. 74).

peoples, / Half-devil and half-child”²⁰⁰), and who would be doomed without their assistance,²⁰¹ being slaves to “Sloth and heaten Folly”.²⁰²

By aligning himself with Crusoe, Friday’s person comes to incorporate characteristics of the so-called “noble savage”, the opposition to the ungrateful native, rising (though only slightly) above his unruly and savage brethren, and ultimately being appreciative of the noble efforts of the White Man. According to imperialist ideology, the coloured races will benefit from the aid of their betters, in the form of the implementation of superior Caucasian culture and civilization. By virtue of this type of rhetoric, of course, the British colonists effectively justified their otherwise malicious and racist actions. The viewpoint of the native populations was of no concern, as the ruling masters were mistakenly confident in their own ability to determine the needs and deeper nature of their counterparts.²⁰³ While its modus operandi states otherwise, I am tempted to argue that the ultimate goal of this so-called “burden” is not the enlightenment and eventual equality of the colonized subjects, but rather the continuing of the status quo, by which the Caucasian people are presented as superior. I perceive the scheme as born from xenophobic insecurities rather than patient benevolence.

Arguably, the integrity of Crusoe’s particular “burden”, his relationship with his servant, Friday, rests on the fact that the latter submitted willingly, rather than being forced into servitude by his master. But what other options presented themselves to the unfortunate Friday? His choices were indeed severely limited, varying between returning to a tribe who would undoubtedly once more attempt to kill and consume his person, escape Crusoe’s authority, becoming an enemy of both his native people and the colonist, or simply submit to the colonist and live. Thus, it seems as though external circumstances first and foremost,

²⁰⁰ Rudyard Kipling, ‘The White Man’s Burden’, in *Victorian Poetry – An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by Francis O’Gorman (Victoria, Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 652-653 (p. 652).

²⁰¹ Ibid.,

²⁰² Ibid., p. 653.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 652.

rather than Crusoe himself *directly*, force Friday into slavery, though Crusoe clearly takes advantage of the man's obvious predicament. Yet despite his subservient position, the character of Friday is never directly referred to as a slave.²⁰⁴ This, however, seems merely to be a question of semantics: a result of the imperial powers attempting to rename their colonial efforts, assuming a more benign identity, while maintaining their original goal.²⁰⁵

Still, not only the psychology of the colonist, but also that of the colonial subject, is a crucial component in Crusoe's quest for self-realization, and the degrading process of "othering" in general. For also the *signified* must come to acknowledge the utter insignificance of his or her own person, and by extension, their origin. "Every effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behaviour," writes Frantz Fanon, "to recognize the unreality of his 'nation', and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure."²⁰⁶ The protagonist expresses satisfaction at the thought of the devotion and natural subjugation he believes to be found in Friday's person, insisting that

never Man had a more faithful, loving, sincere Servant, than *Friday* was to me; without Passions, Sullenness or Design, perfectly oblig'd and engag'd; his very Affections were ty'd to me, like those of a Child to a Father; and I dare say, he would have sacrific'd his Life for the saving mine upon any occasion whatsoever. (p. 151)

While such an observation would, of course, be the natural and desired outcome of the colonial project, readers can only assume that these are the views which Friday himself holds. For, what do we truly *know* of Friday's views beyond the beliefs of his self-appointed master, which are never verified beyond Crusoe's own perception? Does this indicate an overall lack

²⁰⁴ Peter Hulme, 'Robinson Crusoe and Friday', in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 108-119 (p. 113).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*,

²⁰⁶ Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', in ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory – A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 36-52 (p. 45).

of interest in the thoughts of Friday on the author's behalf? Is Daniel Defoe deeming such a character incapable of producing the introspection and deeper thoughts which Robinson Crusoe provides? Or, would perhaps a glimpse into the psyche of his servant ultimately strip Crusoe of the noble attributes granted him? Unfortunately, Daniel Defoe chooses to offer his audience no alternative to the subjective interpretation of the protagonist.

In *Friday; or the Other Island* (1969), Michel Tournier explores a scenario in which the native's perspective is examined to a greater extent.²⁰⁷ While the text follows the same overall path as its predecessor, the effect produced by its narrative differs from the original novel, presenting an alternative yet plausible interpretation regarding Friday's person. The Friday visualized by Tournier demonstrates a more wilful disposition than his original counterpart, refusing to surrender fully to the regime of his master, retaining characteristics of his "natural" state.²⁰⁸ The attitude of desperate, almost child-like devotion which Crusoe experience is merely a ploy undertaken in order to ensure survival. Furthermore, the carefully cultivated island colony which is so precious to Crusoe – representing both his individual ingenuity, and his heritage – in fact presents itself to the native as a truly ridiculous project.²⁰⁹

Still, the Robinson Crusoe which Daniel Defoe intended to portray is not one which could be deceived by such a display, being possessed of admirable cognitive skills. Furthermore, the conquest and redemption of the dangerous "other" were in all likelihood intended to soothe the fears of his readership, and boost morale in relation to the British imperial project. Consequently, an alternative interpretation of Friday, as presented by Tournier, would prove quite devastating to his sales.

²⁰⁷ Richard Philips, 'Unmapping Adventures: Post-colonial Robinsons and Robinsonades', in *Mapping Men and Empire – A Geography of Adventure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 143-160(?) (p. 155), in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>> [accessed 18 August 2011]

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*,

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*,

Ultimately, despite the otherwise harsh and unpredictable nature of Crusoe's experiences, the novel reveals itself to be based upon a logical structure, designed to appear as an example in terms of colonization. Defoe initially depicts the titular character as a dissatisfied, young man in search of self-realization through purpose, and then proceeds to provide him with a gratifying objective, which benefits not only Crusoe himself, but also his immediate surroundings. Finally, once the aforementioned objective has been successfully completed through the medium of colonization, Defoe rewards him by granting him the freedom to return home.²¹⁰ Consequently, Crusoe undergoes a gradual development, changing from a naïve youth, to a determined colonialist, and, finally, a seemingly "all-powerful imperialist"²¹¹ icon.

In the end, Robinson Crusoe's island occupancy (and indeed the narrative as a whole) does indeed culminate in the full realization of his colonial and imperial efforts, including not only the cultivation of the fertile island territory but also the accumulation of additional subjects. Arguably, some of the previous circumstances through which Crusoe acquired Friday's person are seemingly revisited and amplified, cementing the protagonist's superior qualities and natural position as ruler. In a moment of glorious heroism, Crusoe attempts to communicate with a group of Spanish sailors held captive by cannibals. The captives in question have a significant reaction to the presence of their rescuer: "The poor Man with Tears running down his Face, and trembling, looking like one astonish'd, return'd, *Am I talking to God, or Man! Is it a real Man, or an Angel!*" (p. 183). Though denying any divine associations, Crusoe nevertheless underlines his significance by stating that "I am a man, an *Englishman*, and dispos'd to assist you" (p. 183).

Likewise, when faced with the prospect of treacherous mutineers, he proves himself to be of an utmost merciful disposition, granting them a sanctuary of sorts on his island, rather

²¹⁰ Philips, 'The Geography of *Robinson Crusoe*', p. 125.

²¹¹ Richetti, 'Robinson Crusoe', p. 210.

than face the gallows of England. This, of course, gives him the opportunity of leaving the care of his colony in their hands, rather than abandon it to suffer the eventual doom of disintegration. However, this speaks not only of Crusoe's supposed great benevolence but also of pride, as he undoubtedly finds his colony the only redeeming feature of an otherwise ungodly territory. Robinson rejoices in his fine colonial accomplishments, celebrating the now larger population of his land, which serves as proof of his own power and authority:

My island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in Subjects; and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a King I look'd. First of all, the whole Country was my own meer Property; so that I had an undoubted Right of Dominion. *2dly*, My People were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Lawgiver; they all owed their Lives to me, and were ready to lay down their Lives, *if there had been Occasion of it*, for me. (p. 174)

Ultimately, through the course of the text, the classification of "other" proves to be open to a great variety of segments: though almost invisible, there exists, throughout the pages of *Robinson Crusoe*, another being of apparently lesser consequence. Readers find that the protagonist does not on any occasion vex over the *absence* of female company, nor mention the ways in which a woman would have been of *no use* on the island, being physically weak and emotionally compromised creatures. Rather, he refrains from *any* mention of the fairer sex until some brief words near the novel's end, regarding his marriage and the eventual death of his wife (his attention turning instead to his nephew's new business endeavour), proving, perhaps, too much a product of masculine, logical persuasions to allow for the weakness of any biological instincts, or unnecessary emotional connections.²¹²

Yet, as Friday and his people secured Robinson Crusoe's identity while shipwrecked, this secondary, feminine "other" likewise aids him in establishing a new identify still, upon

²¹² Ian Watt, 'Robinson Crusoe', in *Myths of Modern Individualism - Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*, Canto edition (New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 141-171(p. 169).

his return home, in relation to cultural norms. Thus, women seem reduced to silent counterparts to active men, quietly and obediently breeding children.

In addition, the text presents itself as a unique combination of striking literary innovation and cultural perception, organizing notions of “nature, kingship, providence, opportunity, and self-restraint into a coherent new personality”, consequently generating “a work of ideology as well as a work of fiction”.²¹³

In the end, Robinson Crusoe concludes his decade-long narrative, quite delighted with the success of his endeavours and his ultimate fate, pondering the creation of yet another volume describing the further events of his life. The colonial agenda of the imperial project has indeed proven triumphant: the White Man, despite his many trials and tribulations, civilizing and cultivating foreign territories, conquering savage natives as he finds them.

However, the qualities evident in Friday’s character do not coincide with this designated role, functioning merely as a device to propel the development of Robinson Crusoe further. For despite his honest affection, unwavering loyalty and obvious domestication, Crusoe does not permit Friday to be viewed as a true equal – or, more correctly, he *cannot* allow Friday to be viewed as an equal, for fear of distorting his own self-image. In much the same manner as the unnamed Indian depicted in “The Catch” and the unfortunate Dr. Aziz of *A Passage to India*, Friday would always have been defined as “other”, no matter *how* pleasing his mannerism; his actions of little overall consequence. Though, ironically, the protagonist would, perhaps, have preferred to share his habitat with a more rebellious native, consequently being given the opportunity to reprimand him more severely.

Unlike the previous texts, rather than encouraging independent thought and an overall critical view, *Robinson Crusoe* fully celebrates the fruits of the imperial project. Driven by strong and lasting imperial ambition, success is to Robinson Crusoe measured first and

²¹³ Geoffrey Still, *Defoe and the Idea of Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 158.

foremost through the accumulation of physical property and the cultivation of land and dominion, rather than human relationships, any notion of ethics effectively linked to colonial concerns of financial and cultural prosperity.²¹⁴

While his achievements *do* express an undeniably productive and innovative nature, the imperial and colonial persuasions which cause Robinson Crusoe to not only strive for survival, but ultimately seek dominion over the land and human beings on the island, arguably limit the more mental aspects of his self-realization. For despite his apparent success, and though he has indeed gained valuable practical knowledge, the original system of beliefs held by the protagonist, based on a hierarchy of ethnicity and culture, still persists. He remains the superior colonial master; the coloured peoples his natural subjects, both through natural and divine law.

I find that the text portrays at its core an imperialist view wherein all which lies outside the British core of the Empire is effectively compared to it; viewed as a reflection of it, nothing granted a separate, objective definition.²¹⁵ Accordingly, “Crusoe, faced with multiple material threats to his very survival, manages his own anxiety by defining these threats as the mere challenge of the foreign to his British ingenuity.”²¹⁶

However, though a contemporary readership would undoubtedly disapprove of Crusoe’s colonial approach, condemning him as a vicious racist, he is not, in fact, an embodiment of narrow-minded cruelty. Rather, he constitutes the unfortunate result of a collective British mindset, in which such values were encouraged, and considered most natural, protecting the structural integrity of the collective whole.

The original, colonial stereotype as presented through the novel constitutes a crude sketch as opposed to full-fledged, realistic segment. Though not yet possessing the calculating

²¹⁴ David Dabydeen, ‘Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)’, in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature – A Reader*, ed. by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 104-107 (p. 107).

²¹⁵ Philips, ‘The Geography of *Robinson Crusoe*’, p. 120 and 122.

²¹⁶ Sudan, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

abilities of its descendants, it is nevertheless described as brutal and dangerous creature to be feared and loathed. With the exception of Friday (and possibly his father) there are no apparent nuances within the cannibals; they are simply brutal and hedonistic, while the protagonist is civilized and pious.

Yet, the initial, paralyzing terror linked to “the other” is eventually followed by practical reasoning. For, to a significantly greater extent than any previous text discussed in this thesis, there is a clear strategy for dealing with such creatures. Disguised as a necessary duty, kindly undertaken by the colonizer, for “the other” the only alternative to subjugation, and subsequently a deliberately futile assimilation, is not only spiritual damnation but brutal slaughter.

Still, the effort to portray the stereotype as a stagnant and vicious two-dimensional creature, and the signifier as active, benign and transcendent, proves counterproductive: the text in fact reveals “the other” to be capable of loyalty and kindness, and overall quite versatile. The main representative of the stereotype, Friday, is able to adjust to – and more importantly, accept – an entirely new cultural structure, his conduct based on gratitude and devotion. His master on the other hand – dependent on, and consequently limited by, the questionable social and cultural structures of the British Empire, even when removed from it, and largely motivated by a desire for property, authority and a general ethnic superiority – proves himself incapable of, or at least unwilling to attempt, any of these feats. Rather than presenting a stagnant *stereotype*, the novel reveals instead a stagnant colonial *signifying* structure, within the origins of colonialism and its corresponding literature.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This thesis was undertaken with the overall intention of exploring the reality of “the other” as it appears in four literary texts: “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” and “The Catch” by Nadine Gordimer, *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster, and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. Placing particular emphasis on the signifier which enables the concept of “the other”, I have sought to explore and discuss the motivation which enables the process of stereotyping, as well as its continued existence, and, in the hopes of uncovering a unifying component, originating with the signifier rather than the colonized subject.

Through the efforts of my thesis, I have made certain findings I believe to be of relevance. I ultimately find that I have, indeed, touched upon several common denominators evident in the process of “othering”. Though differing in terms of length and context, the exploration of the literary works in question nevertheless reveals certain distinct truths. However, I must also acknowledge that it has become evident that the concept is larger and more complex than I initially anticipated. Provided the opportunity; I would very much appreciate the opportunity to analyze a greater number of texts, developing my comprehension of the field further.

“[T]o exist,” claims Homi Bhabha, “is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness.”²¹⁷ This particular existence, however, entails a unique comprehension of reality. A perpetual threat to the field of human interaction, stereotyping nevertheless continues to be perceived as a *solution* by those who utilize it, either pacifying or destroying an unwanted

²¹⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition’, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory – A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 112-123 (p. 117).

counterpart. Broadly speaking, it presents itself as an external fix, employed (at times subconsciously) to aid an internal frailty.

Still, whether viewed as problem or solution, the concept possesses an overall deceiving nature, generating an artificial construct, whose given role does not coincide with its individuality, and has thus shown itself to be a devastating force. The designated “others”, despite varying in ethnicity and cultural heritage, are ultimately perceived in a similar manner by their signifiers, as though constituting a single undesirable species, in the form of a troublesome, if not repulsive counterpart.

Overall, “otherness” speaks not solely of the unfortunate symbiosis of a strong component dominating a weaker counterpart, or the existence of an unrealistic ethnic hierarchy, but also an essential mental requirement. For, it appears the immediate and continued mental well-being of the Western colonial forces, in fact *requires* that they perceive themselves as the superior component in a binary system consisting of “self” and “other”. The identity of the individual, and the well-being of the colonial agenda as a whole, rely on the knowledge that the colonial forces are indeed superior to those which are colonized, in terms of morals, ingenuity, and, perhaps most important of all, intelligence and physique. As my analysis of both “The Catch” and *A Passage to India* have shown, the process of “othering” enables a sense of belonging; the rejection of the stereotype functioning as a rite of passage into the signifying community.

In an exercise of domination and humiliation, whose intention is arguably to prove the inadequateness of the colonial subject, the perceived “other” is made to realize his or her own inadequacy, and encouraged, if not forced, to adapt to the dominant culture, abandoning his or her inferior ways in favour of emulating the colonial master. But, of course, the signifiers’ overall need to preserve their own sense of superiority prevents the possibility of a successful imitation from taking place. Thus a perpetual struggle is revealed, in which “the other” strives

for, but never achieves sameness, simultaneously infuriating and satisfying their self-appointed superiors. However, the appearance of control and authority exuded by the signifier, as the dominating force, is a mask, behind which lurks not only arrogance and condescension, but also varying degrees of insecurity, paranoia, and despair.

To some extent prophesized by the character of Hamidullah in the initial pages of *A Passage to India*, whether immediately, upon first sight, or eventually, after days, or even weeks of coexistence, the process of “othering” is destined to occur. Regardless of relating to a need for physical security and survival, or a threat to a social reputation, the signifying forces ultimately buckle under the pressure of their own insecurities, causing them to instinctively tear down another’s character in order to preserve their own.

One of the most formidable weapons employed by the colonial masters is that of language, or rather, lack thereof. The concept of the spoken word is effectively linked to execution of authority; the voices of the colonizing collective are the only ones allowed to prevail. Power is the birthright of the white races, while silence and obedience to the words of his masters is that of the colonized subjects. As a result, the colonized subjects are portrayed as constituting either inarticulate fools or beings whose silence supposedly masks unimaginable cruelty and deviant tendencies.

Although the aforementioned stereotype could easily be perceived as embodying but a single structure, the concept reveals itself to be versatile in nature, containing several breeds of “others”. For, as the signifier acts according to varying motivational factors, so the *signified* also holds certain diversities. Ultimately, I find that the concept is not a stagnant force, occupying the space of one dimensional creature, but rather as a structure subject to constant altercation and reincarnation.

Daniel Defoe, for instance, portrays the naked, primitive, and ultimately, cannibalistic brute, while, through the narrative of *A Passage to India*, the unfortunate Dr. Aziz is deemed

a semi-civilized, calculating sexual predator, the black man of “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” combining certain elements of the latter two, and the unnamed Indian of “The Catch”, constituting a helpless, pathetic, though amusing figure. In addition, though not as prominently depicted, there appears the feminine “other”: a mutely obedient, if not hysterical creature, functioning as a necessary counterpart to her logical, active and powerful male. Unlike its colonial counterpart, however, this female creature must be protected; its safety and virtue governed by men, and thus may be subdued almost to the point of oblivion. Overall, the stereotypes possess a significant amount of psychological and cultural power, constructed “openly”, mutable even, to accommodate the needs of the signifier, though, ironically, closed to the signified “others” themselves.

A constant companion of expanding human civilizations, possessing the potential to embody all notions which the human mind can conceive of, I conclude that “the other”, does not in fact exist. Despite its semi-human visage, the creature amounts to nothing beyond a physical manifestation of a phantasm, created on behalf of a colonial master’s will.

In the end, the circumstances and values, and even actions of the signifier’s alien shadow may be viewed as irrelevant. It is first and foremost the psyche of the colonial forces, which dictate the creation of the stereotype, rather than any physical or social attribute possessed by the “darker races”. The designated “others” function simply as a convenient outlet, “the other” being the result, rather than the cause.

Heavily influenced by this perception, murder, destruction and theft – all symptoms of a deeper sense of anger and uncertainty – are interpreted within the imperial and colonial sphere as a righteous quest of glory, which provided aid to the savage and primitive foreign races. However, influenced by fear, disgust, arrogance and flawed cultural and biological perception, does the imperial project generate a scenario in which actions of brutality on the behalf of the conquerors may be sympathized with, if not fully pardoned?

I find that I cannot concur with such a suggestion. For, despite the historical and psychological heritage which surrounds its conception and continued existence, the concept of “othering”, wherein individuals, as well as larger groups are defined as beings of lesser value, remains at its core a human injustice and those who invoke it unjust in their actions. In terms of the *extent* of its selfish utilization, the stereotype presents itself as a potentially universal concept; “othering” arguably transcends the limits of gender, sexuality, race and time.

Rather than providing the ultimate defence, however, the process proves itself a vicious circle. The employment of the concept arguably furthers the conditions which it was intended to counteract, the signifier growing dependent on the structure he or she invokes, forever nurturing fear and proving unable to counteract with others without the aid of a symbolic shield. Furthermore, the actions of the colonizers, through which they seek to shield themselves from their dangerous counterparts, arguably prove counterproductive: their own fear and contempt generate exactly the same feelings within the colonized subjects. The conscious and deliberate rejection “the other”, both physically as well as mentally, produces feelings of resentment and desperation in the subject peoples (as particularly witnessed in “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” and *A Passage to India*). In this manner, both colonizer and colonized help maintain a perpetual circle of aggression and hate.

By partaking in this circularly act of representation; the Western world leaves itself significantly vulnerable: without the “aid” of an outside contributor, to whom it may compare itself, it cannot ascertain the self-image which it not only desires, but requires. Thereby, should the status quo be altered and the colonized peoples gaining autonomy, the values, identity and function of the colonial masters would be threatened to the point of destruction. Thus, the signifiers are essentially victimized by the institution which they maintain. The undesirable situation as a whole could potentially be alleviated by striving to accomplish a

genuine, collective meeting of “self” and “other”, in which the two abandon their previously established characters, and view one another anew.

However, given the choice, how would one rather be perceived, as a rightful, though occasionally opposed master, or a malicious, deluded oppressor? The answer, sadly, appears obvious. Why would the dominant component ever wish to substitute power (even if infused with subconscious hysteria) for an alleviated conscience? To face a genuine reflection of oneself and the society to which you belong – the very notion which the conquering nations have feared for centuries – is, perhaps, too daunting a task to undertake, and thereby, an alternative to the stereotype, impossible.

Still, there are exceptions to the otherwise strict coexistence. The intentions of the authors themselves, in their creation of their respective “others”, differ. Daniel Defoe presents a reflection of the reality which he himself perceived as authentic, whereas Nadine Gordimer and E.M. Forster appear to issue a challenge to their readership, compelling them to examine stifling cultural and racial conventions.

In the latter’s novel, Adela Quested is ultimately able to view Aziz in a rational light, separating him from the entity which she herself, alongside her countrymen, had created. Furthermore, the characters of Cyril Fielding and Dr. Aziz, despite the troubled state of their friendship, represent the potential for a union based on positive curiosity and acceptance. However, despite his unique and valuable perception, Fielding’s insight is arguably not revealed in an equally powerful context to that of Adela.

Likewise, Gordimer allows a glimmer of hope to seep through, addressing the possibility of humble re-evaluation and a resulting comprehension, on behalf of the signifier. The pages of “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?” indicate the potential for significant insight and consequent change. Through the final ponderings of the text’s focalizer, during which the unnamed female – unlike, for instance, Robinson Crusoe, who

spent several years with Friday by his side, yet never entertained such a notion – reflects critically on her previous actions, Gordimer suggests the potential for the individual’s triumph over a collective supremacist psyche. Prompted by external circumstances, these characters – notably all women, with the exception of Fielding – are able to readdress their own views in relation to “the other”, and indirectly also themselves as well. In their own fashion constituting a stagnant element, are women possibly less inclined to heed the call of colonialism than men? If so, imperialism and colonialism – and, by extension the signifying process – may not only exist as a male enterprise, but also, to some extent, as a decidedly gendered concept.

However, regardless of gender, this discussion has enabled me to perceive that within each larger dominant group there are deviations, suggesting, perhaps, that despite an obvious overall constructed division between “self and “other”, there may also be an underlying desire for truth, unity and equality. “The other” constitutes a manmade, constructs (though based on false premises), and is likewise destined – by means of innovation, objective perception and devotion – to be conquered in the same manner: by the hand of Man.

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